

LM 116

ISSUE No

Ken MacLeod:
why science fiction
has given up on
the future

Can Jack Straw save
your marriage?

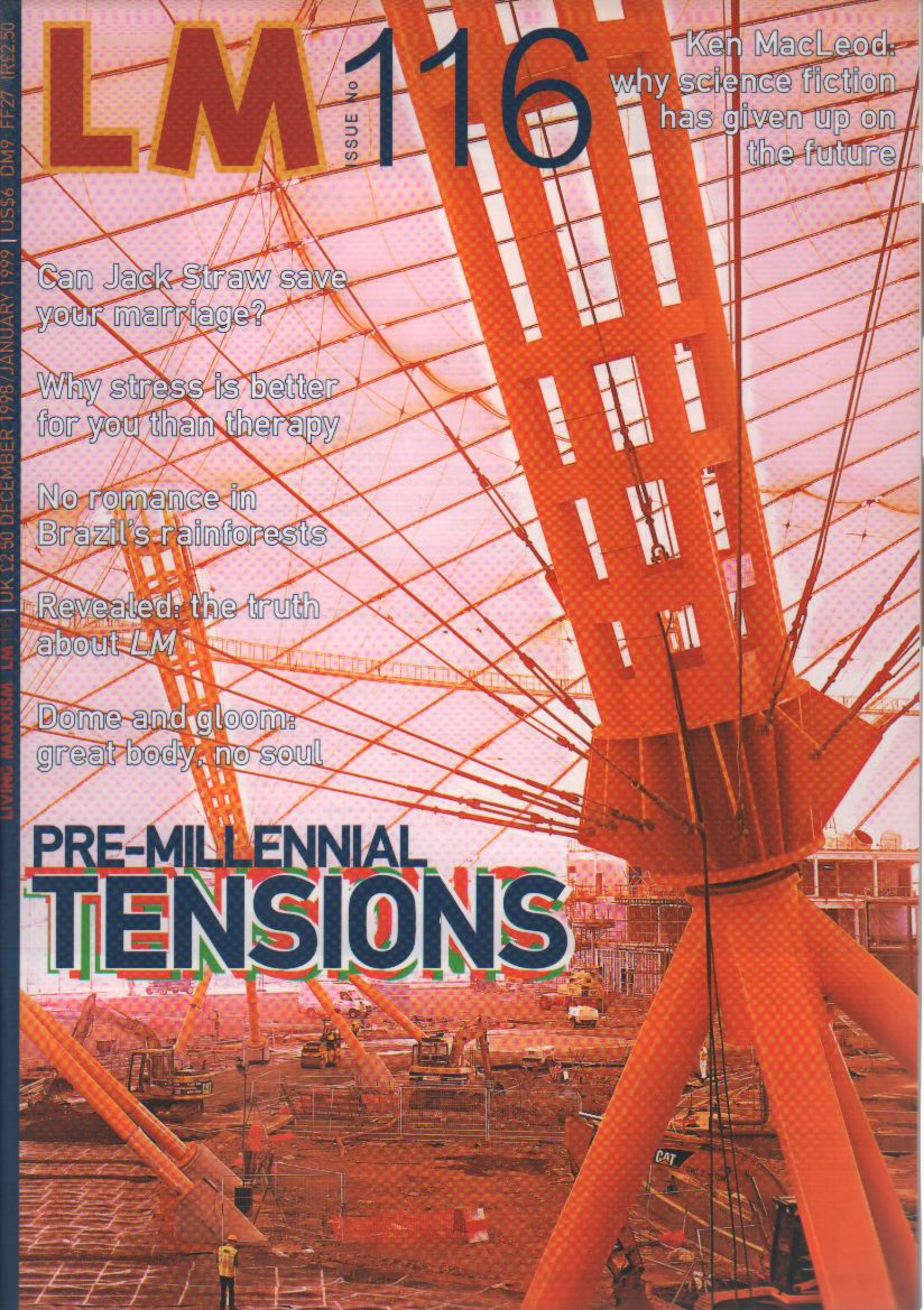
Why stress is better
for you than therapy

No romance in
Brazil's rainforests

Revealed: the truth
about LM

Dome and gloom:
great body, no soul

PRE-MILLENNIAL TENSIONS



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MAGAZINE

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HEARD THE ONE ABOUT LM AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN MILLIONAIRE?



MICK HUME
Editor

YOU MAY HAVE READ THE RECENT ARTICLES IN the *Guardian*, the *Observer*, *Prospect* magazine and elsewhere, which expose 'the truth about LM'—that this magazine is in league with the far right and big business, and is funded by dubious sources.

If you missed the articles perhaps you are one of the many who was mailed or emailed copies by public-spirited individuals. Or perhaps you have picked up some of the more garish rumours doing the rounds of the internet and the journalists' bars, which our critics have not yet plucked up the courage to publish—like the story, emanating from somewhere in Clerkenwell, that LM is financed by a white South African millionaire who wants to undermine the left.

Entertaining though these highly inventive articles and bizarre bits of gossip are, their authors are not joking. These are serious attempts to discredit LM, designed to drive a wedge between the magazine and those who support it—especially those who support LM in the libel case brought by ITN.

I have neither the space nor the patience to dust off every speck of dirt thrown, but elsewhere in this issue we will try to set the record straight about some of the more serious specific allegations (see page 22). For now, let me simply repeat that LM is not funded by any foreign party or government, or the 'loony right', or big business, or any racist millionaires. If anybody can provide conclusive proof that we are, I will pay double the amount they find into their personal bank account.

The main political allegation running through these attacks is that LM is harbouring a secret agenda. It is such a well-kept secret, however, that our critics seem a little confused about exactly what it is.

In October both *Guardian* columnist George Monbiot and *Observer* columnist Nick Cohen claimed that LM is really a friend of the far right and big business, masquerading as a defender of free speech. Yet only a few months ago, their *Guardian/Observer* colleagues Ed Vulliamy and Luke Harding were claiming that LM was really an ally of Serbia and Stalinism, posing as a defender of free speech.

So am I in league with Milosevic or Monsanto? Or is LM part of the International Communist/Capitalist Conspiracy? No wonder George Monbiot's article ends up sounding like a confused child at a parent's knee, asking of LM 'where do his politics come from [mummy]?' (*Prospect*, November, reprinted in the *Guardian*, 27 October).

Meanwhile Nick Cohen, the leap of imagination required to catch up with LM's new agenda apparently beyond him, falls back on the familiar terms of abuse picked up from his friends on the old left—first suggesting that LM contributors are like Tories (*Observer*, 25 October), and then, sinking ever-lower, implying that they are like Nazis (1 November). The emphasis is on the zzzzzzzs.

Our opponents may not be sure what our hidden agenda is, but they seem certain that we must have one. Why? Could it be that, since LM cannot easily be fitted into their complacent left v right worldview, they prefer simply to sidestep the magazine's politics? How much simpler it is to try to find LM guilty by association and innuendo, instead of engaging with the ideas in it.

Rather than take issue with LM's arguments, our critics insist that we must really

stand for something else, demanding to know who is paying us to say these things. After all, if you can persuade the world that, in Monbiot's words, LM is 'not what it seems', that there is a hidden hand pulling the magazine's strings, then who cares what it actually says?

Every attack on LM now seems to include an allusion to our supposed friends and influence in high places. It is flattering to know that the magazine carries such clout in the circles where our well-connected critics move. The clear implication of their articles, however, is that LM is a secret tool of the rich and powerful, which no decent citizen should support.

They claim that we secretly run television channels, enabling us to get dishonest documentaries made by LM diktat. Join the LM team, says the *Observer's* Cohen, and 'see the doors of the media, big business and high culture open when you ring'. This is all

HOW MUCH SIMPLER INNUENDO THAN TO

a bit rich, when you consider that it is them who can whistle up entire pages of the broadsheet press in which to say whatever they like about LM, while denying us the right to reply.

In a recent letter to the *Times*, Richard Tait, editor-in-chief of ITN, even said of ITN's libel action that 'far from this being a rich company pursuing a poor', it is a case of ITN and its staff being hounded by 'a glossy and apparently well-funded magazine' (23 October). I know we live in a victim-obsessed age, but Tait's whining about his multimillion-pound media corporation being bullied by my independent magazine stands out as a prize-winning pathetic plea for martyrdom. Tait has previously said that this case is an issue of 'good against evil'. No prizes for guessing who is the wicked witch and who the innocent little Snow White in his fairytale version of events.

While we—who-are-not-what-we-seem pursue our evil secret agenda, our critics insist that they are concerned only with maintaining liberal standards and upholding the truth.

Yet their journalistic standards seem pretty flexible, and their attitude to the facts rather casual, wherever *LM* is concerned.

Nowhere is this clearer than in relation to the ITN libel case. This is a major legal battle in which people's livelihoods and the future of the magazine are at stake. Yet even when the issues are so serious, some of our critics seem quite prepared to deal in caricatures and simply to make things up. These papers have got our side of the case wrong so often (continually claiming, for example, that we say ITN 'fabricated' or 'faked' its infamous pictures from a Bosnian camp) that they must be either brazenly dishonest or bleeding dim. (For more on the case, see page 23.) And they refuse to print any corrections. The *Guardian* did not even publish a letter from our solicitors, the respected firm of Christian Fisher, pointing out that George Monbiot had misrepresented our allegations against ITN. The *Observer* did print a couple of short

critic of the use of the libel laws to censor, tells 'the world's leading liberals' who have backed us against ITN's writs that '*LM*'s survival is no great liberal cause'. *Guardian* editor Alan Rusbridger assures his readers that, while he fights libel writs in the noble cause of truth, *LM*'s 'dream' is to be sued by 'someone big and powerful—like ITN' (21 October). It's a fair cop—I have enjoyed the endless lawyers' conferences, legal drafting and fundraising so much over the 20 months of the libel case that I am thinking of changing the magazine's name to *Legal Masochism*.

Rusbridger, Monbiot and co appear to be drawing a new line on libel: defend free speech by all means, but not for 'deranged fundamentalists' like me.

Who is behind the war of words against *LM*? It is hard to avoid the conclusion that it is connected to the libel case, which George Monbiot mistakenly reports as being about

R TO FIND *LM* GUILTY BY O ENGAGE WITH ITS IDEAS

letters in response to Nick Cohen's attacks on *LM*, but only after cutting out every suggestion that their articles might have included any inaccuracies or been economical with the facts.

Some of these people appear to have developed an irrational blindspot about *LM*, so that they are unable to hear the magazine's name without breaking out in a rash. At root it seems they simply cannot believe that *LM* says what it does—and that other people agree with it. *LM*'s defence of individual freedom, our criticisms of environmentalism, appear to George Monbiot to be 'extraordinary', 'mysterious', even 'staggering'. In the age of New Labour, when ideas such as the regulation of people's private lives and 'sustainable development' have become part of the new state-sponsored religion, *LM* is clearly guilty of blasphemy and it should not be allowed.

All that has been written and said about *LM* of late amounts to a warning to people not to support the magazine in its legal battle with ITN. George Monbiot, normally a big

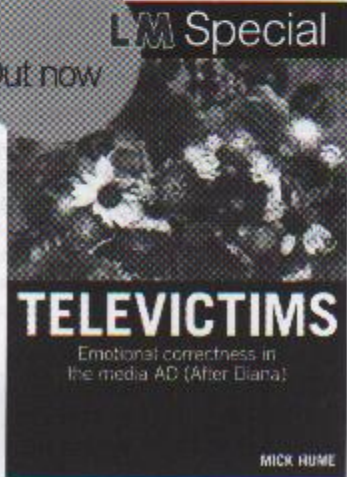
to come to court (if only that were true—see page 23). *Guardian* writers have been down on *LM* since the case began. But what of ITN itself? What part is it playing in all of this?

Some might imagine ITN executives running a black propaganda machine from behind the glass walls of their Grays Inn Road bunker in London. Others might think that sounds like a paranoid fantasy. For its part, *LM* certainly does not subscribe to any conspiracy theories.

But then you hear the story which a journalism student, Chris Mitchell, relates on the letters page of this month's *LM*. Mitchell reports that, when he wrote to Richard Tait of ITN with some questions about the *LM* case, Tait sent him back not the answers, but copies of the recent scurrilous *Guardian* and *Observer* articles, 'which show the true nature of *LM*'. The *Guardian*'s Monbiot has himself publicly criticised ITN for allegedly doing a PR job for the Shell corporation in Nigeria. Yet the ITN editor-in-chief is still apparently prepared to use Monbiot's article in the greater cause of dishing the dirt on *LM*.

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MICK HUME

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Perhaps Rusbridger, Monbiot, Cohen and co should stop wrestling with their consciences over the libel laws, and come out publicly as supporters of ITN's libel writs that threaten to bankrupt *LM*. Then maybe we will all know who our strange bedfellows are.

Out in the open—that is where we at *LM* prefer to fight all of our battles. That is why, from the first, we have called on ITN to settle our dispute through public debate, instead of using the libel laws to try to censor *LM*. There is no hidden agenda here. Perhaps more than any other publication in the country, *LM* makes a virtue of blowing its own trumpet as 'a magazine that will shout what others don't dare whisper'.

For my own part, I disdain to conceal *LM*'s aims or agenda, and I am happy to take responsibility for the magazine's message. Above all in these matters, I believe in free speech. Those who prefer smears and whispers and writs to open debate will have to answer for themselves. ●

FEAR AND LOATHING AT ITN

I am in my final year of a journalism degree at the University of Teeside. At present I am working on my dissertation which I have entitled 'The Yugoslav civil war and the Western interpretation'. I sent a letter to Richard Tait at ITN asking for his opinions on 'The picture that fooled the world', and instead of answering my questions he sent me a selection of newspaper cuttings revealing 'the true nature of LM'. In addition he also said, 'The questions you have posed me bear a striking resemblance to those already asked on this issue. Could you please let me know if they were supplied to you by a third party?' (which they weren't). This is just a note to say how difficult it is for anybody to get ITN to comment on this issue.

The two newspaper cuttings ITN sent me were: 'Hold on a minute', Nick Cohen, the *Observer*, 25 October 1998 and 'Free speech? Excuse me', George Monbiot, the *Guardian*, 27 October 1998.
Chris Mitchell
Teeside

• For more on the war of words against LM see pages 4 and 22

TOXIC TOYS

I read with concern the article on 'Poisonous dummies' in your recent magazine (October). Bill Durodié reports that 'the panic [over 'toxic' toys] has been triggered by two non-fatal incidents involving children choking on parts of toys contained in food... But choking incidents are fortunately rare and when they do occur it is not usually toys that children choke on'.

This is frankly not true. In the UK alone there are three known cases of fatal accidents to small children choking on parts of plastic toys in chocolate eggs. These are well documented and have been published in a number of national newspapers, including the *Sunday Telegraph*, the *Express*, the *Independent* and the *Mirror*.

There is real concern that manufacturers have made no efforts to remove these toys in spite of the fact that both Ferrero and Nestlé have withdrawn products from the US market which are still being sold in the UK and other European markets.

I hope that this information will give Mr Durodié cause to reconsider his sweeping statements. Those of us concerned with these potentially fatal products do not believe that the efforts made to ensure they are safe can reasonably be described as 'panic-inspired'.
Peter Mardon
Winterbothams Solicitors, Gloucestershire

ALTERNATIVE ULSTER?

What exactly is Kevin Rooney's alternative to the peace process ('A bad summer in Omagh and Ballymoney', October)? I'm sure Gerry Adams, Martin McGuinness, John Hume and the others would be interested to listen to it. I'm sure the families whose lives have been shaken to the very core by the war would be interested in his condemnation of the process.

We all know that the media always vilifies the group which has carried out the most recent killing, and that any opposition to peace in the face of such suffering must be spun as a statement supporting war by the media. However, anybody who claims to have an interest in the future of Northern Ireland knows that it is not as simple as this. Okay, Britain is an imperial nation that never had any right to be in Ireland; okay, the Unionists don't have an ideological leg to stand on; but it doesn't make any difference.

The people of Northern Ireland can't begin to think politically in the real sense of change and a better way of life until they can walk down the street and shout their views out without the threat of violence to themselves or their community. Only then will they have the freedom to hold an open debate about other issues. The focus will eventually move away from nationalism and

The what's NOT on guide

CHIPS WITH EVERYTHING: The Department for Education and Employment has announced that schools in England and Wales which serve chips for lunch will be required by law to offer an alternative carbohydrate. The government-approved kiddies' menu suggests jumbo chips as a 'Wednesday winter warmer' with spaghetti rings as the necessary alternative (failure to provide alternatives could lead to it being 'enforced through the courts if necessary'). Chief chef David Blunkett also seems to approve of something called 'fighting-fit fruit salad'. If these regulations are applied in Scotland, the necessary alternative will surely be 'deliciously unfit deep-fried pizza'. **ACADEMIC UNFREEDOM:** The standard research contract issued by the Department for Education and Employment now includes a clause which requires academics to 'incorporate the department's amendments'; that is, to doctor their conclusions to order. For the British Educational Research Association, Professor Michael Bassey said 'it's totally unacceptable'. Lord Russell, professor of British history at King's College and a Liberal Democrat peer, quipped: 'If the DFEE knows what the research is going to say, why waste money on researchers?' **BANGED UP:** 'I'm particularly pleased bangers and mini-rockets have been banned', said consumer affairs minister Kim Howells. 'These are the hooligans' main tools.' Ground spinners, jumping crackers and helicopters have also been outlawed under the terms of new fireworks legislation. All very well, but when are they going to start hanging, drawing and quartering the sparkler-wielding hooligans. G Fawkes-style? **OUTING OUTED:** BBC bigwig Anne Sloman instructed controllers of BBC radio and TV stations that 'under no circumstances should the allegations about the private life of Peter Mandelson be repeated or referred to on any broadcast', after Times columnist and former Tory MP Matthew Parris outed Mandelson on Newsnight and Labour MP Diane Abbott followed suit on *Question Time*. BBC journalists were reported to be outraged by the 'laughable and insulting' ban, as was cabinet minister Mo Mowlam who was warned off the subject by Any Questions presenter Jonathan Dimbleby. **ROAR SILENCED:** The editor of *Roar*, the student newspaper for King's College, London, was suspended after some students' union officers complained that several articles contravened the union's equal opportunities policy. One article ('Carry on cottaging'), which described sexual activity in the toilets of the Strand site of King's College, was said to be homophobic. A spoof column written by an Alf Garnett-style taxi driver was scrutinised for using words such as 'wop' and 'kraut'. And a drawing of female genitalia, taken from a medical advice leaflet, was said to be pornographic. Meanwhile the ruling body of the University of London students' union has banned delegates from smoking and drinking alcohol during its meetings. You never know, they might start talking sense.
Compiled by Andrew Calcott

WE WELCOME READERS' VIEWS AND CRITICISMS

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identity towards a broader consideration of society. They won't be interested in the goings-on of Westminster or Dublin or the European parliament unless they can let go of the fear and hate which is an endemic part of living in the violence and heartache of war.

If *LM* insists on criticising the process, at least give readers a real alternative to think about, not just a theoretical critique which leaves us high and dry, thinking yeah, okay, and...?

Tara St John
London

PEOPLE TV

If Claire Fox had her way ('Only connect?', November) we would all be watching *Late Review* and *The Money Programme*; good TV if you are into it, I guess, but the majority of us aren't interested. We like docu-soaps and soap operas; we like watching other people, people like ourselves, living their lives and making decisions. Not because we are stupid and don't have any outside interests, but because we are interested in people.

Fox seems to think that anything which mentions the word 'people' (especially when it has a capital P) must, by definition, be bad. But for years and years people have been watching people—on *Coronation Street* and *EastEnders*, right up to *Hotel* and *Soho Stories*. People watch people because they are interested in humans and how they interact—I think it shows a humane streak through society not a 'dumbing down'.

Jackie Casey
London

HO, HO, HO LEONARDO

I notice that you are promoting *LM* Xmas cards with Leonardo da Vinci's famous logo as 'the perfect card for non-believers'. Unfortunately his symbol was very much part of a belief system now commonly known as Neo-Platonism. In 1509 the Italian mathematician Fra Luca Pacioli published his *Divina Proportione*. This work popularised Plato's 'golden section', or 'divine proportion', which asserted as a rule that—in any geometrical ratio—the greater

part is to the lesser what the whole is to the greater. In his book which discusses the aesthetic impact of what he terms 'sacred geometry', Robert Lawlor accounts for Pacioli's concern with Plato's solids in this way: 'The [art] student's concentration on the transparent solids was a discipline to assist in seeing the metaphysical realities beneath all appearances.'

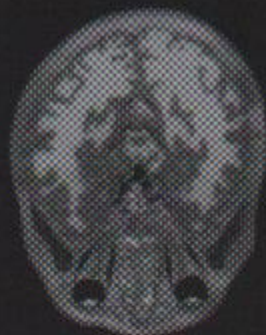
The teachings of Pacioli were influenced by da Vinci (1452-1519). Da Vinci provided Pacioli with 60 drawings to illustrate his 1509 book on the divine proportion. Seventeen years before that, da Vinci produced his 'Universal Man' sketch (also known as 'Vitruvian Man'—after the Roman architect Vitruvius (90-20 BC) who wrote 'man is the measure of all things'), and it was also based upon Plato's 'golden section'. In the 1492 sketch the sections of the body from head to waist and from waist to feet are to each other what the section from waist to feet is to the length of the whole body.

Never mind; whatever its mystical origins 'Universal Man' is still a decent motif.
Merry Xmas!
Aidan Campbell
London

Mind



expanding



substance



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TABOOS

Irma Reilly does not want to share her private life with Jack Straw's army of marriage registrars and health visitors

Supporting families like a rope supports a hanging man

New Labour's latest initiative to 'support' families shatters the traditional consensus that government should not interfere in people's most intimate relationships. Home secretary Jack Straw's policy proposals confirm that this is a government for which no corner of life is too private to merit intrusion.

Governments have long realised that explicit 'family policies' are difficult to manage. People usually have a gut reaction against being told how to live their private lives. While policies that target 'dysfunctional' families have generally been seen as acceptable, initiatives which attempt to shape the family lives of all have been regarded as a no-go area. But not for this government.

'Supporting families', the latest in a long line of government green papers—now known as consultation papers—takes the view that all families are in need of some assistance, and sets out to devise comprehensive 'support' measures. Whether or not you feel your relationship is in trouble, whether or not you want help, in future state agencies will be there to interpret your needs for you and to launch some pre-emptive action.

Every year about 155 000 marriages end in divorce, giving the UK the highest divorce rate in Europe. Prompted by their belief that 'marriage is the best way for two adults to raise their children', the Home Office has produced a paper which lists initiative after initiative aimed at persuading us to (i) get married, and (ii) stay married.

Jack Straw has made much of the fact that this is the first real policy initiative to address such basic family issues. This might suggest that the government has worked hard to develop innovative policies beyond the capacity of previous administrations. Yet, on inspection, most of the suggestions are simply banal and appear to have been inspired by two platitudes: 'You never know what goes on behind closed doors' and 'Marry in haste, repent at leisure'.

For instance, for reasons that are never explained, the government seems to have concluded that a major cause of marital breakdown is the propensity of couples to rush into marriage (and by implication parenthood) without considering whether family life is really for them. This is rather

bizarre, as statistics seem to suggest that couples now think more carefully than ever before exchanging vows. Today, 70 per cent of couples who marry have cohabited beforehand—more than a third start their families before they formalise their 'union'. Both men and women are delaying marriage until later in their lives than at any time in the past 60 years.

Despite this, a top-line proposal is to end 'quickie weddings', in which couples marrying in a registry office need give only 24 hours' notice. If the green paper proposals are accepted, both partners (not just one as at present) will be required to attend the registry office to give notice of their intent to marry 15 days before the ceremony. On doing so they will be given a 'statement of rights and responsibilities', so that there will be a

HEALTH VISITORS WILL DOUBLE UP AS NOSY THERAPISTS

'clear statement of what their new [marital] status means' and a recognition that 'marriage is a serious business'.

The role of registrars will change. Government is concerned that while those who opt for a religious ceremony attend classes to prepare them for their new commitments, those of us who opt for civil ceremonies escape such tutoring. They want registrars to give pre-nuptial counselling and to provide a 'marriage preparation pack'.

The suggestion that divorces might be prevented if people understood more about marriage before entering into it seems laughable. The overwhelming majority of newlyweds are aware of the pitfalls of marriage—they know people whose marriages have failed, they just think that their relationship will be different. For many it is—after all, the majority of people who get married stay married—but for others 'stuff happens'. The reasons why relationships break down can

rarely be anticipated and are as various as the couples who experience them. People change—grow apart, get bored with each other, meet other people they like more. And so they leave one relationship to start another.

The rate of marital breakdown has increased because social changes have enabled more people to leave bad relationships. Perhaps these changes have also increased our egocentricity, so that individuals feel more entitled to satisfy themselves rather than make sacrifices for the good of others to whom they have responsibilities. The integration of women into the workforce has given many the economic independence to walk away, and has also, arguably, reduced men's traditional sense of family responsibility. The culture in which we live encourages us to be true to our feelings—to live for 'love'. Neither women nor men, in modern society, are expected to sacrifice themselves on the altar of family responsibility. Nor would many of us prefer to see the clock turned back to the days when couples were locked into loveless relationships based solely on notions of duty. The stigma of divorce has gone—and that is to be welcomed.

The pattern of marriage is unlikely to be changed by government edicts demanding that we take it more seriously, no matter how many times a registrar repeats the government line on what marriage should be about, or how glossy the registrar's advice pack may be. Nor will many marriages be saved by the accompanying proposals whereby couples would be required to attend counselling at least three months before the start of divorce proceedings, to discuss whether divorce is really inevitable.

It would, however, be wrong to dismiss the green paper's recommendations as irrelevant to our lives. They reflect a serious commitment which is at the heart of New Labour's mission: the drive to insert a 'professional' into our personal business, to steer us through problematic private areas.

It is as though the government has decided that ordinary mortals cannot be trusted to run their marital lives. Recognising that we are simply too pigheaded to seek help voluntarily, it wants to make counselling and professional assessment an integral part of those life moments when we engage with the authorities. So, those of us who reject the voluntary



BEN NICHOLSON, BEN NICHOLSON AND BARBARA HEPWORTH, 1933

marriage preparation offered by religious institutions will be compelled to receive instruction from a civil servant—the registrar. Those of us who choose not to seek pre-divorce counselling from organisations such as Relate will again receive a mandatory review of our case—whether we like it or not.

The clearest expression of the government's intention to 'professionalise' our private lives comes in the suggestions to expand the role of health visitors. Along with midwives and other health professionals, they are to be asked 'to identify and offer help with relationship problems' in addition to their traditional healthcare functions. For the government, the problem is that while people are loath to seek marriage guidance from counsellors, many are happy to see health visitors following the birth of a child. Solution: get the health visitors to double up as nosy therapists. It is a clear case of relationship assessment by stealth, and it undermines a couple's ability even to decide for themselves whether they have a problem. What may appear dysfunctional to a health visitor may be an entirely acceptable way of life for those living it.

But in the intrusive world that New Labour is busy constructing, it is no longer for us to negotiate our own relationships. They must be policed and supervised by external agencies.

Time and time again, 'Supporting families' acknowledges that governments should 'be wary about intervening in family life', and swears that it is not New Labour's intention to nanny or lecture. It then proceeds to do just that. As the *Independent* observed, 'It seems that the urge to moralise is just too irresistible for this government' (5 November). These proposals, however, go beyond moralising. They will undermine our very capacity to negotiate marriage and family life for ourselves. And in taking away our right to make private decisions about our intimate relationships they threaten to destroy the essence of a personal partnership—the privately decided boundaries of the relationship.

In trying to reinforce family life, New Labour has shown that it has no understanding of what people value most about their personal relationships. Our partnerships need to be regulated by the standards and principles we set ourselves, not those that Jack Straw's army of marriage registrars and health visitors set for us. When my marriage is assessed and judged by an external agency, it is no longer my marriage—and that really will mark the end of private life as we know and value it. ●

SUBSCRIBE see page 27

Culture Wars



Dumbing Down, Wising Up?

MARCH 1999

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British TV networks are cloning their own versions of Jerry Springer and Oprah Winfrey. News programmes are opting for the soundbite in place of the in-depth investigation. The once-serene world of classical music is quaking with self-doubt, while Radio 4 directors are attacked for being either too shallow or too stuffy. In our schools

there is much talk of standards, but little sign of excellence. In our universities the idea of a liberal education seems to be sacrificed for the sake of greater accessibility.

But does all this mean we are 'dumbing down'? People are reading more than ever (and it's not all Jeffrey Archer), and going to more intellectually demanding

movies. As for music, Beethoven and Mahler are no longer a closed CD to young people the way they were for many of their parents.

Perhaps we are exaggerating our fears, and our anxiety will pass with the millennium. Or perhaps the problem is not as black and white as it appears. Something new and even disturbing is happening to our culture.

but it may not have much to do with creeping vulgarity or people getting stupider.

Culture Wars aims to put to question some of today's most cherished cultural values and assumptions. Everybody is concerned about the future of our culture. Culture Wars is a chance to work out what exactly is going wrong.
Claire Fox and Mark Ryan

PRE-MILLENNIAL TENSIONS

As the countdown to the twenty-first century begins in earnest, James Heartfield weighs the times and finds them wanting

The army has been placed on standby, with territorial units prepared to deal with the emergency. What emergency? The millennium. Ministers fear that the inability of computer clocks to cope with the transition from 31.12.99 to 01.01.00 could cause chaos throughout public services, from traffic lights to hospitals to emergency service switchboards, and plunge the nation into chaos.

There is little scientific basis for these fears (see Mark Beachill, 'Are you ready for Year Zero Zero?', *LM*, July/August 1998). Instead the widespread anxiety about the Millennium Bug in our computers and home appliances is an incarnation of the *fin de siècle* mood that surrounds the arrival of the year 2000. There is the technical problem of the date change in computers, then there is the Millennium Bug, which is something wholly different.

Already the government has set up a special task force to cope with the Millennium Bug, with Tony Blair calling for 20 000 'bug busters' to be set to work to correct the problem. But the first public action of the task force has been to issue leaflets trying to allay public fears that washing machines, microwaves and toasters might take over our homes at the stroke of midnight.

On past experience we can be sure that the one predictable outcome of government assurances will be to aggravate those very anxieties. The possibility that the institutional expression of those anxieties, the Millennium Bug task force, will be able to set them to rest is, to say the least, unlikely. Indeed it is inevitable that the task force will fail to solve the problem of the Millennium Bug, because the bug is not a technical problem in our computers, but a phantasm of popular anxieties that will yield to no technical solution.

What could be an occasion of public celebration, the millennium, instead sums up the gloomy assessment of our times, with its mood of introspection and fear of the future. With the army now mobilised against the passing of time itself, it seems likely that the computer nerds' stopgap solution to the Millennium Bug—reset your clock to 1980—will become the general response to the approach of the millennium itself.

While secular fears of the future fixate on the mysteries of the computer clock, one might expect the Catholic Church to take a more positive view of their messiah's two-thousandth birthday. But the new papal encyclical finds John Paul II embracing postmodern despair rather than giving a message of hope. Noting that postmodern 'nihilism has been justified in a sense by the terrible experience of evil which has marked our age' the pope asserts that 'such a dramatic experience has ensured the collapse of rationalist optimism, which viewed history as the triumphant progress of reason, the source of all happiness and freedom' (*Reason and Faith*). His Holiness warns against 'a certain positivist cast of mind' which 'continues to nurture the illusion that, thanks to scientific and technical progress, man and woman may live as a demiurge, single-handedly and completely taking charge of their destiny'. God forbid.

Perhaps it is unremarkable that the Catholic Church should be hostile to progress. What is remarkable is that the pope is running to catch up with the irrational fears of progress promoted by Europe's postmodernist intellectuals. Indeed, *Reason and Faith* even balks at the more extreme despair now fashionable among the followers of Jacques Derrida and the late Jean François Lyotard.

On the eve of the twenty-first century the public mood contrasts sharply with that at the end of the nineteenth. Certainly there was a lot of panic and doubt in 1899—after all, this was the age that gave us the phrase '*fin de siècle* fears'. But the doom mongers in those days were more than outweighed by a popular ambition for a new age. The Eiffel Tower was lambasted by reactionaries then just as the Millennium Dome is today—except that then the tower was a great popular success. While religious cults anticipated the apocalypse others celebrated the future. When Sigmund Freud published the founding work of psychoanalysis in 1899 he told the printers to put 1900 on the frontispiece, to stake his claim on the new century.

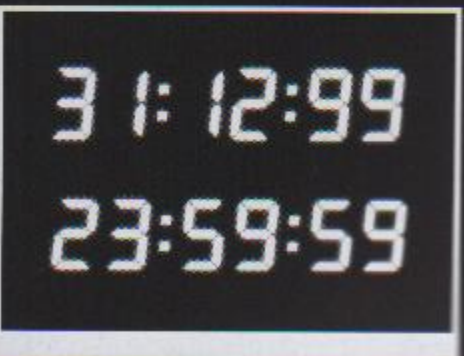
Where the eve of the twentieth century opened a debate about the shape of the future, its approaching close has led to an awkward silence. As scientific achievements are only represented by fears of computer failure, so spiritual matters are represented only by a contentless spirit zone in the Millennium Dome.

The discussion among the New Millennium Experience Company has focused on the need for rituals and monuments that are suitable for our age. The models are unpromising. The new rituals of public grief that reached their peak following the death of Princess Diana indicate a morbid public mood. Few public monuments succeed in parcelling together the fractured allegiances of our time—unless it is the new monument to the Unknown Victim in Westminster Abbey, or the barely human Amazon chosen as the 'millennial mascot', or the plinth that stands empty in Trafalgar Square because the great and the good cannot agree on a modern hero to immortalise.

The approach of the new millennium has only succeeded in bringing out the moral vacuum of our age.



PHOTO: DAVID COWLARD



SPIRIT-FA

Frank Furedi looks into the hole at the heart of the millennium celebrations

It is far easier to build a Millennium Dome on an empty bit of wasteland than to do something about Britain's spiritual wasteland. Building a monument is the easy part. But a monument to what? Just pose the question and the absence of a vision that could inspire society becomes evident. That is why the management of the Millennium Dome is having so much difficulty working out a spiritual message for its project.

Since its inception many people have expressed concern about what the Dome will stand for. How would the Dome's promoters portray the image of Britain? Traditionalists were up in arms last December after the Dome organisers expressed reservations about creating a strong British image. The critics were apprehensive that marginalising British history and tradition could undermine the identity of the nation. In contrast,

the Dome team took the view that union flags and historical pageants would send the wrong signals by stressing Britain's imperial past, instead of projecting the image of Cool Britannia rebranded for the next millennium.

Since the beginning of 1998 church leaders and theologians have also expressed anxieties about the role that Christianity would have in the Dome's celebration of the millennium. From the outset the advocates of the Dome have stressed that their project would provide an opportunity to celebrate spirituality. However, such vague talk of spirituality disturbed many church leaders, who feared that the trendy promoters of the Dome would come up with some fashionable new-age formula. The Right Reverend Gavin Reid, Bishop of Maidstone, who chairs the archbishop's millennium advisory group, is happy enough to have officials waffling on about spirituality, so long as 'that is not a substitute for content which is clearly Christian'.

At a January 1998 meeting of Anglican bishops, church leaders were relieved to hear Peter Mandelson, the minister in charge of the Dome, give assurances that the impact of Christianity on Western civilisation would be a central theme of the celebration. But unease remained. As far as the Anglican leaders were concerned, the celebration of the millennium, which after all is a Christian festival, had to have significant Christian content. At the same time, however, recognising that British society is no longer composed only of Christian people, the bishops warned the Dome organisers against offending other faiths or acting as if only Christianity mattered.

It is difficult to imagine how the promoters of the Dome are going to create a Christian festival that also embraces other faiths. Perhaps that is why they have avoided tackling the issue.

The promoters of the Dome have preferred to discuss the design, as opposed to the content, of the so-called spirit zone. The original proposal for the spirit zone placed great emphasis on meditation and reflection as opposed to formal religious worship. The zone was to be housed in an imposing glass and steel pyramid, containing a Christian monastic cloister, a Japanese Zen garden and a Muslim garden. These attractions were promoted on the grounds that they would give punters an opportunity to 'experience a moment of peace' to 'reflect on our deepest common beliefs'. What these 'common beliefs' might actually be was presumably left to the advertising agencies to work out.

By the summer of 1998 it became clear that the spirit zone was in deep trouble. A monument ostensibly devoted to the celebration of human spirituality served only to draw attention to the moral malaise afflicting society. In August it was revealed that nobody had come forward to sponsor this eclectic mishmash of designer/DIY spirituality. Church leaders were clearly embarrassed by the lack of commercial interest in the enterprise. Bishop of Whitby, the Right Reverend Gordon Bates, told Christian churches to 'get off their backsides' and find the £12 million to build the spirit zone.

In the end the first serious offer of cash for the spirit zone came from a Hindu charity, when the Hinduja brothers pledged £1 million in October 1998. The Hinduja brothers explained that their gesture was motivated by the ideal of promoting multicultural understanding. The Bishop of Maidstone preferred to put a different spin on the episode, saying how heartened he was that people of other faiths were prepared to recognise the millennium as 'the anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ'.

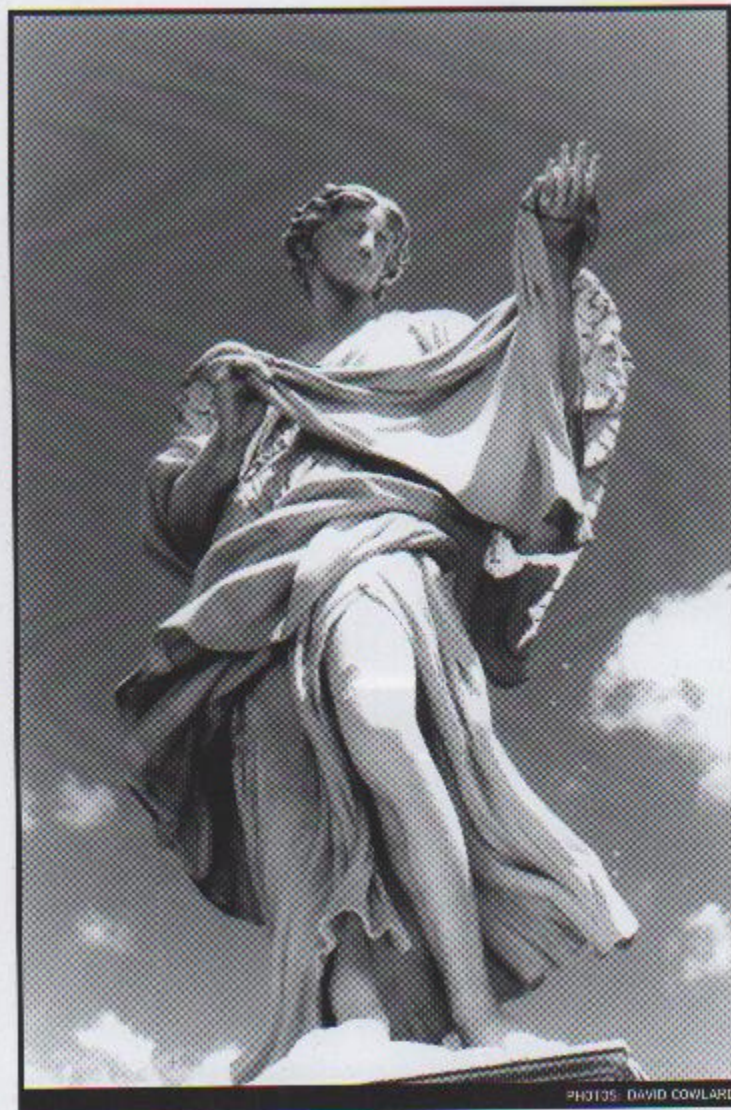


PHOTO: DAVID COWLARD

FREE ZONE

The organiser of the Dome project, the New Millennium Experience Company, claims that it was difficult to get sponsorship for the spirit zone because 'there is not an obvious commercial link'. But big corporations often finance projects with no direct commercial links if they think that it will boost their public image. The problem is that being associated with a mishmash of Zen Buddhist gardens and Christian cloisters is not exactly the image that most companies want to acquire. Indeed it is the very incoherence of the spirit zone concept which explains its lack of appeal to the commercial world. And it is not only business that has remained indifferent to this project. The spirit zone has failed to capture the imagination of even the small minority of practising Christians.

The lack of financial support for the spirit zone has now forced the organisers to scale down the project, from a glass and steel pyramid to a canvas tent. This change of design has been justified on technical

grounds—apparently the proposed pyramid was so heavy that it would fall into the Blackwall Tunnel—but it is more likely that the decision was influenced by the absence of moral and financial underpinning for the project.

The absence of any serious debate around the embarrassing saga of the spirit zone indicates a reluctance to tackle the real issue at stake. The profound moral malaise which afflicts Britain cannot be overcome through a Millennium Dome-type publicity stunt. The attempt to bypass the issue by appealing to a diffuse sense of spirituality merely exposes the lack of any vision that can inspire the public. Spirituality means nothing unless it is attached to a set of concrete beliefs and values. Human beings are not spiritual in some general sense. Such sentiments come to the surface only in relation to an outlook which moves people. That spirit can assume a religious or a humanistic form. But whatever the case, it is not enough simply to believe—it is necessary to believe in something.

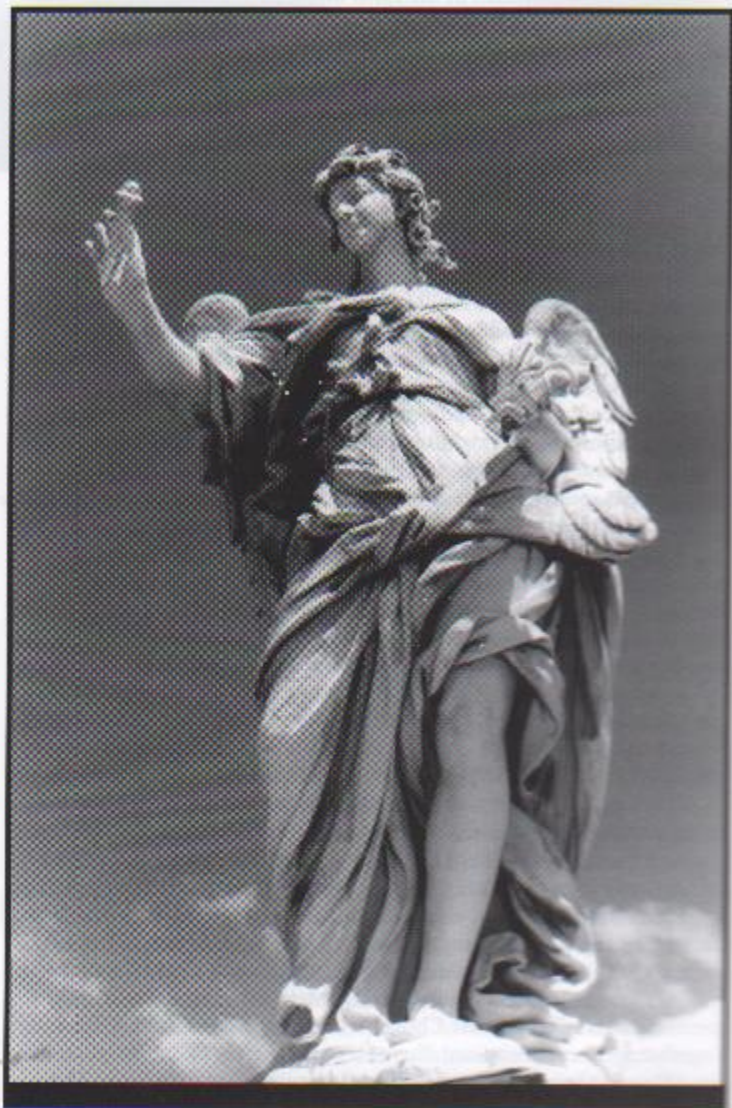
FASHIONABLE RELIGIONS ARE SPIRITUALITY IN FORM BUT SELF-OBSESSION IN CONTENT

Without beliefs that inspire, spirituality can only exist in a fragmented and highly individualised form. This is why numerous new-age religions and fashionable cults can flourish. But the answer they appear to provide is about 'how to find yourself' or how to survive, not how to find a higher purpose in life. From this perspective spirituality means nothing more than a reflection on the self, and certainly not on a god. It is spirituality in form, but self-obsession in content.

Many established church leaders have jumped on the bandwagon of the 'me, me, me' spirituality. Earlier this year, the Bishop of Salisbury informed the public that henceforth at Church of England funerals mourners will be encouraged to place teddy bears or favourite books on coffins and to talk about their feelings. This post-Diana gesture

assumes that people talking about themselves—rather than paying their respects to the deceased—is what spirituality is about. It seems that even the act of mourning together now needs to be punctuated by a session of highly individualised therapy.

The moral malaise is the product of a variety of complex influences. However, as the experience of the spirit zone indicates, Britain's political, cultural and religious elites lack the conviction to tackle the problem. They prefer to evade the issue through meaningless rhetoric about spirituality or multiculturalism, and are scared of asking what society should really be about. One suspects that they are not merely being evasive. It is more than likely that they themselves are not too sure about what to believe in these days. If they were honest they would call their canvas tent a spirit-free zone.



'WE CAN ASSUME THAT JESUS IS IN THERE'

Brendan O'Neill found Christian leaders more confused than celebratory about their messiah's forthcoming birthday party

Today's crisis of faith is not because of or about the millennium', says the Right Reverend Gavin Reid, Anglican Bishop of Maidstone. 'It is something that has been happening since the 1960s. There has been a growing disdain for traditional religious institutions among many people, and we know that church attendance has fallen during that time.'

Reverend Reid is chairman of the Church of England's millennium advisory group, and has played an important role in discussing what should go in the Millennium Dome's spirit zone. Despite the decline of traditional religion, he argues, there is still room for spirituality in the new millennium. 'There may be a questioning of the relevance of traditional institutions, but at the same time there is a continuing openness to spirituality, which is why we see so many new-age groups. People want to believe in something. Traditional religion may have problems, but religious man is alive and well.'

But what about the idea of a universal truth and Christ's message that only those who follow Him will be saved? Surely that is more important to a senior man of the cloth than just 'wanting to believe in something'? Reid thinks I am being a bit heavy. 'For many the millennium is a good excuse for a party', he says, 'and it is not exclusively Christians who will be invited to the party. Imagine you are a parent: you don't stop celebrating the birthday of one child just because it isn't the other children's birthdays, do you? You let the others join in'.

So that is the role of the Christian church today: not to convince and convert people, but to act as a kindly parent to many 'different' children. 'I'm not saying that', says Reid. 'The millennium is the two-thousandth birthday of Jesus Christ. It is in essence a Christian celebration and other faiths cannot exactly be incorporated into it. But they can help us celebrate.'

At the end of the millennium traditional Christianity has declined as part of a wider loss of faith in society's traditional values. Churches which claimed that they alone knew the 'absolute truth' were never going to fare very well in a post-traditional society where there is no real consensus about what is right or wrong. Reverend Reid talks about 'new spirituality' and people 'wanting to believe in something', but all that shows is that society is more individuated than ever. It is because of this crisis of faith that the spirit zone is such a mess.

Even the Catholic Church has watered down its claim to absolute moral authority. Once calling itself 'the one true, apostolic church', the Catholic Church has now teamed up with the Anglicans and the Methodists to form Churches Together for the Millennium (CTM). But they are careful to point out that this is not an authoritarian body. 'We don't want to impose a way of celebrating the millennium on all Christians', says the Right Reverend Crispian Hollis, Catholic Bishop of Portsmouth and deputy moderator of CTM. 'But we do want to prompt people to remember Christ at this time, as this is his millennium.'

According to CTM's promotional literature, 'It would be wrong to try to impose some central masterplan upon every region and locality. It is far better to allow imagination and energy to explode around the country, and to believe that the churches in every region and neighbourhood could and should find their own ways of bringing home the true meaning of the year 2000 to the communities to which they belong' ('How should the churches in England mark the millennium?').

The Church of England's increasing interest in new forms of spirituality and the Catholic Church's involvement in Churches Together for the Millennium illustrate a move away from Christianity's aim of 'saving humanity' and towards increasing individuation. The emphasis is on how individuals feel about the millennium, not on any

collective celebration or positive millennial outlook. So what exactly will be going into the spirit zone? 'I can't tell you', says the C of E's Reverend Reid. 'It has been revealed to us but it's a secret. But do I have a scowl on my face? No, I don't. So we can assume that Jesus is in there.' Reid seems happy that Jesus is in the spirit zone, among, one can only assume, many other things.

As a recovering Catholic I am no fan of Christianity. But I recognise that when Christianity was confident about its message it had the power to lead people, usually by instilling the fear of God into them. Consider the stunning cathedrals across Europe, designed by the best architects of the day and decorated by the greatest artists. Each one of them is testament to an inspiring sense of power and higher purpose, to the old churches' ability to move people. Today, on the eve of Jesus' two-thousandth birthday, all that the Christian churches can manage is a canvas tent and a slightly weird garden. If He hadn't risen from the dead He would surely be turning in His grave.

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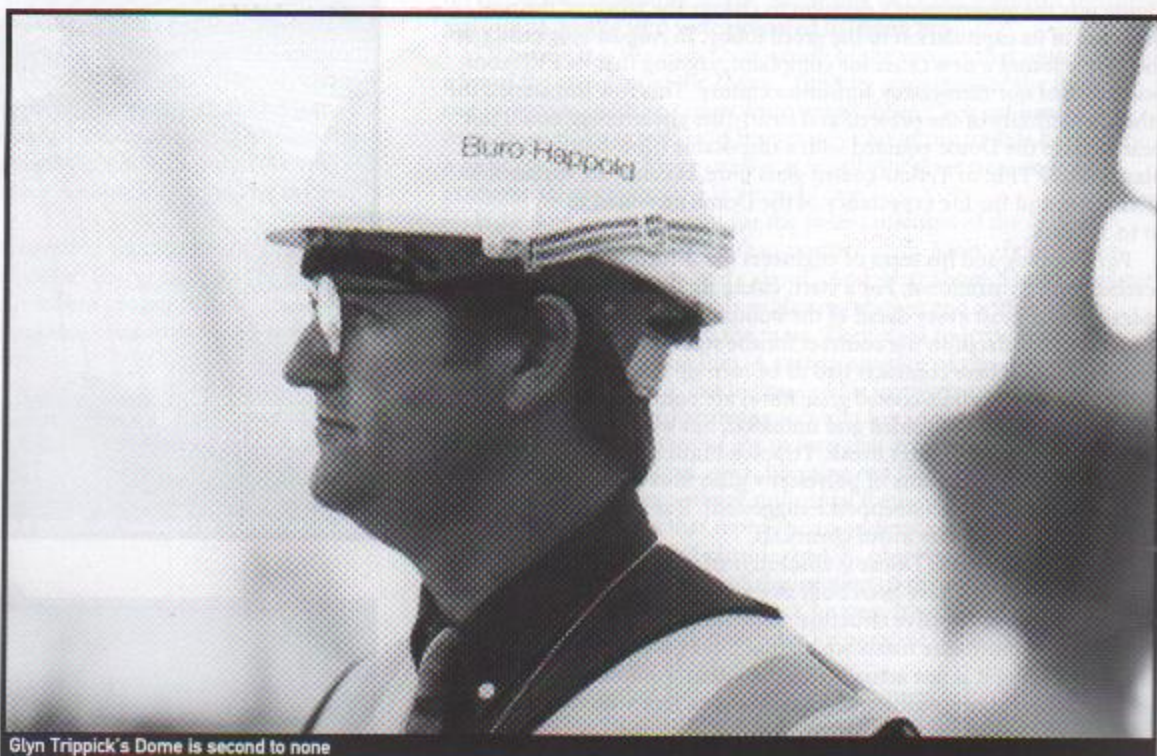
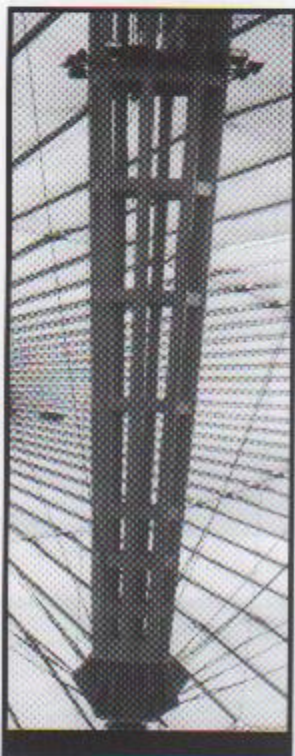
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MAN OF STEEL

Vicky Richardson talked to Glyn Trippick, the engineer who has overcome all of the political foot-dragging to help make the Millennium Dome a technical wonder of our age. Photographs by David Cowlard



Glyn Trippick's Dome is second to none

Architect Lord Rogers of the Richard Rogers Partnership may have taken most of the credit (or blame) for the Millennium Dome, but it is really an engineer's building, in the tradition of Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace and Gustav Eiffel's tower. One of those engineers is Glyn Trippick, project director of the Dome for the Bristol-based engineering firm Buro Happold, in conjunction with the Richard Rogers Partnership.

Just 18 months ago the largest structure on the north Greenwich peninsular was the New Millennium Experience site office. Now the prefab—no garden shed itself—is a speck on a horizon dominated by the Dome. When I talked to Trippick it became clear that 1998, not 2000, was the year he will remember.

Like the Dome, Trippick is not fashionable or postmodern. But his unshakeable confidence in the project is a nice change from the defensiveness of his client, the New Millennium Experience Company. He sees the Dome for what it is: a tremendous technical achievement. And this confidence in the technology has carried him through the pessimism and political foot-dragging that surrounds the structure, and which has caused unnecessary panics and placed needless obstacles in his way.

For example, in September the headline 'Dome risks collapse into Blackwall Tunnel' appeared on the front page of the *Observer*, causing great hilarity in the Greenwich site office. Rather than getting on the phone to reassure the client that the ground was indeed still there, Trippick pinned the cutting on the wall with other Dome memorabilia. Two weeks later the paper printed an apology, but on the same day the *Sunday Telegraph* filled its Dome slot with the same recycled story ('It'll be ready...when', 4 October). The problem of supporting the ground above the Blackwall Tunnel had indeed been an issue for Trippick, but that was several months previous to the *Observer's* revelation. The solution turned out to be a straightforward system of reinforced foundations to bridge the tunnel and support the spirit zone above.

The first thing you notice about the Dome is its sheer size: my quick site visit took three hours. The inside is still a cavernous empty space, apart from pavilions housing catering facilities and services. It is so big that walking around the perimeter hardly feels like walking in a circle, until you find yourself back where you started. This month all 13 zones will go on site, each one a substantial building in its own right.

Standing underneath the world's largest covered structure it is easy to get carried away with symbolism, since the only things to compare it to are mountains and canyons. But the Dome is very much a man-made achievement, the result of a genuine collaboration between architects and engineers. There are up to 1000 builders on site at any time and Trippick himself admits he is amazed by the technology every time he walks round to check on progress. 'Somebody I'm employing knows how all this stuff works', he says, 'but I don't!'

Many critics have said that the form of the Dome and its grand scale symbolises oppressive authority (namely Peter Mandelson's). In the recent memorial issue of *Marxism Today*, critic Jonathan Glancey writes, 'dictators and their architects have chosen domes because domes represent the last word in control...The Millennium Dome is thus a disturbing symbol of social control'. Presumably Glancey believes that Eskimos are the biggest control freaks on the planet.

By contrast Trippick sums up the Dome, magnificent though it is, as 'an engineering response to indecision'. 'The job has gone ahead because we didn't sit back and wait for the arguments to reach a conclusion', he says. Ironically it is precisely the building team's isolation from the political debate on the Dome that has allowed it to get built.

The Dome was the product of an undefined client-brief. 'This was commissioned by the previous government, so we had to design something that would allow flexibility', says Trippick. So while the 13 zones planned by Mandelson may have their problems there are actually no limits to what could go inside the Dome. 'It's unconstrained. Basically it's a big umbrella designed to keep out the wind, rain and sun.' □

☞ Cables are raised off the ground on masts—each one twice the length of Nelson's Column. Each mast is supported on four legs, spaced widely enough for articulated lorries to pass underneath. When politicians had no idea what to put in the Dome, the designers were already thinking of the possibilities. 'At the back of our minds we pictured the Dome housing an eight-lane, 400-metre running track in the middle with space for several football pitches around the outside.'

One major consequence of the political indecision surrounding the Dome was the government's decision to change the fabric of the roof, born out of its capitulation to the green lobby. In August 1997 critics of the Dome found a new cause for complaint, arguing that its PVC roof was a sign of our throwaway consumer culture. This row threatened the ethical credibility of the project, and clearly the government could not bear to have the Dome equated with a disposable (non-biodegradable) plastic bag. PTFE, or Teflon-coated glass fibre, became the sustainable alternative and the life expectancy of the Dome increased from 10 to 25 years.

For Trippick and his team of engineers the u-turn must have seemed entirely irrational. For a start, changing the roof fabric meant redesigning almost every detail of the building from scratch, and by the time of the decision the contract for the steel and cables had already been awarded. These contracts had to be torn up since the fixings for PVC and PTFE (Teflon-coated glass fibre) are completely different; polyester fabric can be folded and unfolded, but when glass fibre material is folded the fibres break. Trippick himself is reticent about the environmental benefits of polyester v glass fibre. 'We could have used cotton canvas [as Greenpeace suggested]. But we would have had to soak it in some pretty awful chemicals.'

Technologically, the Dome is absolutely of our time and, says Trippick, 'could not have been built five years ago'. It is an extremely minimal and cost-effective structure, consisting of a net of steel cables supported by 100-metre masts which pull huge panels of fabric taut. Strictly speaking it is not actually a dome—that would involve materials held in compression (pushing together)—but a tent with the fabric stretched in tension. Both the cables and the fabric are pushed to their absolute limits to create a structure that is cheaper per square metre than a B&Q shed. Cables and fabric have been used before, but the Dome puts them together in a unique and novel way. A computer program called Tensyl, first developed by Buro Happold in the 1970s, has made this possible by calculating the cutting patterns for the fabric, the length of cables and the forces pulling them in different directions.

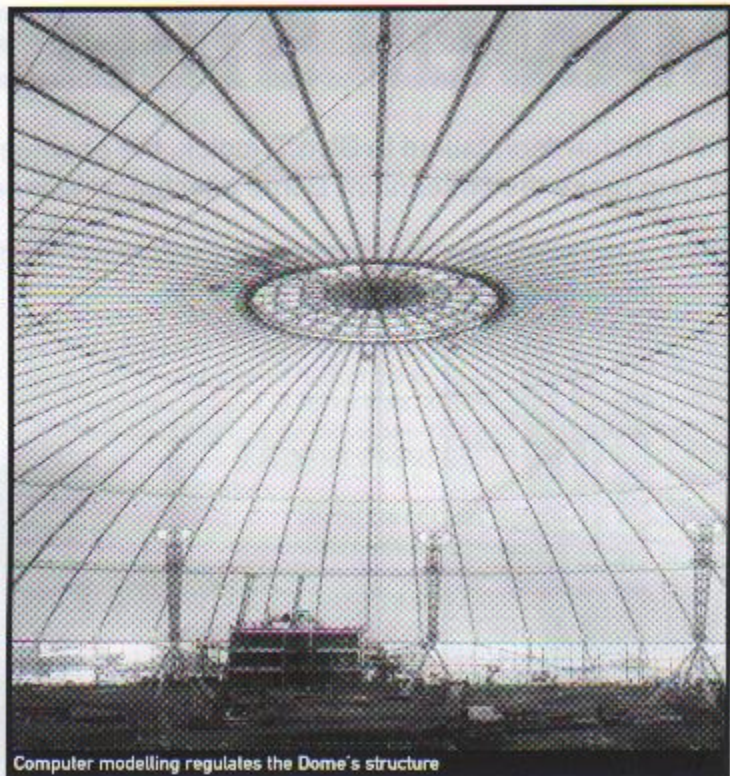
Stylistically, the Dome is not complex enough for some architectural critics. Many of them wish we could have had a variation on Bilbao's crashed spaceship (the Guggenheim Museum designed by Frank Gehry)—a flashing image that has become familiar all over the world. As postmodern writer Charles Jencks puts it, 'architectural fashion demands something that is jumping and organic'.

But the Dome's geometric rigour, which Trippick and the other designers have fought for, transcends fashion and captures a humanist spirit that is not easily reproduced on t-shirts or fridge magnets. However vapid the contents of the Dome may turn out to be, the building that will house them is an inspiration. ●

Vicky Richardson is a senior reporter on *RIBA Journal*, a monthly architectural magazine, and co-author of *In Defence of the Dome*, with Penny Lewis and James Woudhuysen. Copies are available from the Urban Research Group; email: vickyr@easynet.co.uk

DOMES FACTS

- One kilometre circumference
- 80 000 square metres of ground space
- 13 Albert Halls could fit inside
- 12 steel masts, each 100 metres long
- £758 million total cost
- 12 million visitors expected during the year 2000



Computer modelling regulates the Dome's structure



Each mast is twice the length of Nelson's Column

DOME MONGER V DOOM MONGERS

Ben Evans, the man planning the world's biggest new year's eve party, talked to James Heartfield

When New Labour decided to shake up the Millennium Dome, one disgruntled 'creative' complained of the appearance of a load of 'scruffy mockneys' taking over the project. The original scruffy mockney is Ben Evans, the 35-year old with the world's most pressing deadline: 1 January 2000.

You could not call Evans a 'suit', more like black t-shirt and jeans. But that is part of what is attractive about the small team planning the events and content of the controversial Millennium Dome. 'What's interesting about this team is that there is nobody over 40', he says, 'we're all in our 20s and 30s'.

Just as well. 'Another VE-Day celebration was what worried us', he says, recounting that the army officer in charge of that campaign was seriously considered for the millennium project. 'It was dreadful, like *Dad's Army*—just the sort of thing that reinforces the view that Britain is a backward-looking country.'

'It is a very unique project to be involved in, a national project to shape national perspective and generate a degree of confidence in the country', says Evans. 'I like the ambitious nature of it, and I like the democratic nature of it.' Like many of the Blair team, Evans worked with David Puttnam's Enigma Productions, originally a film company that Puttnam redirected towards policy development. It was at Enigma

that Evans and others developed the idea that Britain had to shake off its backward-looking image. According to Evans, Puttnam recruited a group of people who were prepared to 'think big'.

Of course it is the ambitious nature of the project that underlies a lot of the criticism of the Dome. The very grandness of the thing is out of keeping with our more introverted times. 'You get beaten up over it—socially as well as in the press—a lot of my friends have had a go at me about it. Everyone wants to tell you their view on it and everyone thinks their view is the right one.'

How does Evans account for the press criticisms of the Dome? 'Knocking-copy goes further than positive copy. Most of the articles written for something to write about.' And what about 'Dome minister' Peter Mandelson? 'He's a man with a reputation and with his own particular relationship with the press. They want to write about him and they want to criticise him. A certain amount of the criticisms of the Dome have come just because of his involvement in it.'

Evans does not indulge in any second pleading about the criticisms of the Dome, because 'we've got to turn that around'. He is confident that many doubts will fall away, pointing out that the television schedules already plan a major millennial focus and that the BBC has already sold rights that represent an audience in excess of a billion viewers worldwide. Those outside the UK, observes Evans, have more of a sense of the significance of the location of the meridian line running through Greenwich. In fact, he says, it was NBC's offer to buy the rights to it that first alerted Peter Palumbo at the Arts Council to the importance of the event.

Here's hoping that Evans is right, but I cannot help thinking that he underestimates the resistance to the idea of the Dome. It is not so much the thing itself as the symbolism of the millennium that aggravates the disquiet about the Dome. The Dome is just a mirror reflecting a wider social pessimism. If Mandelson is a target of such sentiment, it is largely because his own reputation as the 'prince of darkness' sums up the sentiment that any ambition to get things done—especially on the grand scale—is suspect.

Ben Evans is understandably perplexed by the view that the Dome is an exorbitant waste of money that should be redirected to the poor: 'If you could drop it within the ocean of health spending it would disappear. The amount of money we are spending is tiny compared to a new hospital. Of the total budget of £790 million the public money—actually lottery money—is only £390 million, the rest is all raised income.'

As he says, probably 'everyone could have a bottle of champagne' for the same amount of money 'but what would that mean?'. The argument that the money should be spent instead on social problems is not really a rational proposal. It is more an expression of the parsimonious feeling that people should not be having fun while the poor are still with us. Arguments for social redistribution may seem to be democratically inspired, but as an example of public expenditure the Dome is more clearly aimed at the mass of the populace than most.

In response to the charge that the Dome has been over-secretive, Evans protests reasonably enough that 'you don't open all your presents before Christmas'. But the overriding sentiment that we are all being hoodwinked is not really based on a rational calculation. It is a feeling that arises out of the yawning chasm between the mass of people and the politicians today.

The greatest problem for the Dome is that a feeling of being out of touch tempts the organisers to try to connect with people by talking down to them. That was summed up by the proposed 'Euan test'—that the exhibits should be appealing to Tony Blair's nine-year old son Euan. 'We're not allowed to say that now', says Evans. But the uncomfortable compromise between worthy education project and theme park sums up the difficulties of organising public celebration at the millennium.



DISENCHANTED FOREST



When 25 school students and volunteers visited the Brazilian Amazon rainforest in August, they found things were not quite as they had been led to expect. Neil Ross tells their story

I wanted to go because I was concerned about the destruction of the environment. The rainforest to me meant everything. But it wasn't what I expected. There were people my age scraping a living collecting rubber from trees for a pittance, a dead industry in Brazil. We met Indians from reserves who wanted transport and roads. We met subsistence farmers who wanted to leave the forest but felt they didn't have the education to get city jobs. I think the bottom has fallen out of my world.'

This was Sam, a 19-year old would-be UN soldier who had never before considered the rainforest a home for the 30 000 rubber tappers, 400 000 subsistence farmers or the 20 million inhabitants of Brazil who use it as a resource. Why should he have?

In British schools the rainforest is taught largely as an environmental matter, under the headings of sustainability and conservation. In so far as the people living there are considered, they too are considered in need of preservation. But as the participants on our trip to Brazil discovered, the rainforest is neither a zoo nor a museum.

Expectations of a luscious tropical landscape destroyed by evil loggers, cattle ranchers and wanton developers, were soon dashed. 'In Rondonia, travelling on a tractor and trailer, we passed through an area of burning', said Ray, aged 17. 'This was the height of the "burning season" and we'd been warned to wear masks. Our parents were fearful of us getting trapped by a blaze; we'd seen the TV images, the devastation. Up close it looked bad, but casting your eye beyond a few burnt tree stumps in an open field, it looked like a tiny black spot in the miles and miles of green. Our guide, Enoch from EMATER [the Brazilian Institute for Agricultural Assistance and Rural Extension], explained that most of the burning is to clear the ground to get a grass crop, to fight the regrowth and to run a few cattle on poor terrain. This made sense.

'I don't know if I thought people just went there and burned down vast lumps of forest for the hell of it, but I had never thought how else you clear a field when you haven't got machinery, when you can get more money running a few cattle than picking up nuts. What do you do when you can't get the fertiliser to keep small areas of pasture lush?'

Staying in the forest was an experience—but hardly a soft vacation spot. We stayed in a centre known as CAEX near Xapuri, in the state of Acre. It consisted of crude huts with hooks for hammocks, a meeting and cooking place with clay ovens and some showers put in by a non-governmental organisation (NGO).

At night we froze; we radioed nuns in Xapuri who rallied round to get us blankets. After a day following rubber tappers and subsistence farmers we decided to move out. Seventeen-year old Talyena, smug because she was the only one to bring a sleeping bag to the tropics, was shown how to tap rubber and grind manioc.

Juao, a rubber tapper trying to make a living grinding manioc with a stone-age wheel contraption, explained to Talyena that 'the NGOs only come here and tell us about saving the forest but not to see how we live'. Talyena was furious. 'I'd like to have a few words with the people who dish out development around here', she said. Pedro, who helps run the CAEX centre, felt some people had a romantic view of the forest, believing that the lives of rubber tappers should not change. But why shouldn't the tappers have a TV and a car to get to the city?

We visited many NGOs: SOS Amazonas, the Chico Mendes Foundation, the Church Land Commission. Danny, aged 17, felt that these organisations clearly did want to help forest dwellers. 'The problem is', he commented, 'they all felt that living in the forest was it, a way of life to be saved. To be honest I feel sorry for the rubber tappers'.

Heading on to an Indian reserve, the home of the Gaviao tribe, we were shown a traditional woven-palm communal home but told by our guide from FUNAI (the Federal Government Indian Assistance Foundation) that the Gaviao don't live in these any more. They prefer the farmer-style huts with water tanks on the top. The chief, Joao Tipiabi Gaviao, was very excited about a scheme to create a lake stocked with 16 000 fish so that they could go into business. This was not quite what we expected, but the chief was unequivocally positive. 'Today we are working just as the white man', he said. 'Sometimes the youngest Indians learn to work with chainsaws to cut down trees—a difficult task.'

Was it so bizarre that Indians should want decent agriculture and a better life? Perhaps we are just so used to hearing about the threat to Indian tribes and culture and assume they don't want development. The Gaviao were clear about what they wanted and were not afraid to say so. They also wound us up. We were offered what they said was masticated and fermented yam to drink, and they thought it was hilarious that some of the group drank it. They showed off a chained-up monkey, saying they were fattening it up to eat.

In Acre we met representatives from four different Indian tribes—Jaminawa, Kaxinawa, Katukina and Manchineri—who were attending a Portuguese language session at an educational centre. Ania, aged 18, asked what they felt their biggest problems were. 'Our biggest problem is transport', replied the Jaminawa chief. 'We have no way of getting

our produce to markets further away and little money for fuel to even get to the nearest town. The only way to get to a hospital in an emergency is by aeroplane—you radio in the morning and if you are lucky the plane arrives at three o'clock in the afternoon, which can be too late. To get here took one month by canoe, sometimes pulling it when there is no water and I get burnt by river insects, then it takes another month to get home again.'

Ray was stunned. 'We thought they'd talk about the white man, ranchers, intrusions and protecting their culture, but no. They want transport and roads and to learn Portuguese so they can talk to each other, trade and not get ripped off.' A development worker in the centre told us that most of the Indians don't understand their own mother tongue and only the old people speak it. The younger ones think it is gibberish.

The Indians' desire to become more mobile was just the start of a journey full of surprises. We covered 10 000 kilometres in all, flying for hours over green forest broken only by snaking rivers and patches of savannah. Eventually a city would loom up. Manaus, in the heart of the state of Amazonas, was like another world: upbeat, with fantastic architecture, a river beach, a thriving port, and very commercial in the midst of the forest. The capital, Brasilia, was astonishing: a planned city, built out of the forest in four years flat.

Belem in the north-east was quite a contrast. We stayed in an experimental environmental education centre called Escola Bosque. School students there were being taught the need to develop an eco-tourist industry, where the locals can tell visiting environmentalists about the natural life. This was considered to be the way to lift the region out of poverty. We debated the pros and cons, but all felt this strategy was doomed to failure. Unlike Manaus or Brasilia we couldn't imagine tourists coming to impoverished Belem without massive investment in hotels, etc. However much natural beauty there is, it didn't seem feasible that a few student eco-tourists would lift the place out of a rut.

From the rainforest to Rio, nothing was as we had expected on the outward journey to Brazil. The school students in our group discovered that so much of what they had learned at home is myth, and they are now passionate about telling people what they really found in the rainforest. We have made a film of our journey, *Where Do People Fit In?*, which deserves to be shown.

Neil Ross is now studying development economics at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London

Some environmentalists are flirting with the urge to purge humanity, suggests Ron Arnold

Visions of human annihilation

Millennial angst used to be the province of street-corner prophets with signs announcing 'The End Is Nigh', but today it belongs to environmentalists. After more than 30 years of media hype, doomsday divinations and global gloom, a vast public is soaking up the message like a sponge. Social analyst Robert Nisbet's assessment is to the point: 'Environmentalism is now well on its way to becoming the third great wave of the redemptive struggle in Western history, the first being Christianity, the second modern socialism. In its way, the dream of a perfect physical environment has all the revolutionary potential that lay both in the Christian vision of mankind redeemed by Christ and in the socialist, chiefly Marxian prophecy of mankind freed from social injustice.'

The public message doesn't tell you, but the redemption demanded for messing up that perfect physical environment, unlike Christianity or Marxism, holds no hope for humanity. The present goal of environmentalism, as Nisbet admonished, is 'little less than the transformation of government, economy and society in the interest of what can only be properly called the liberation of nature from human exploitation'.

To liberate nature from human exploitation is a goal with an implicit apocalyptic consequence: not the improvement of humanity, but its end. Of course, the movement's supporters do not endorse that end, but some leading environmentalists clearly see the logical outcome of the argument.

For decades environmentalists have imbibed the poetry of Robinson Jeffers, whose 1926 poem 'The answer' gave Friends of the Earth the name for their news bulletin *Not Man Apart* ('the greatest beauty is/Organic wholeness, the wholeness of life and things, the/Divine beauty of the universe. Love that, not man/Apart from that'). Those who consider Jeffers

the poet laureate of environmentalism prefer his more caustic brews, such as 'Original sin': 'As for me, I would rather/Be a worm in a wild apple than a son of man/But we are what we are, and we might remember/Not to hate any person, for all are vicious/And not be astonished at any evil, all are deserved;/And not fear death; it is the only way to be cleansed.'

Some leading environmentalists have long flirted with the urge to purge. However, Ethnic Cleansing... For Everybody is not a popular slogan, so most keep mum. But not all. 'If you'll give the idea a chance, you might agree

calamity could wipe out the entire human race, other species might once again have a chance'.

Unlike *Wild Earth's* Voluntary Human Extinction Movement (VHEMT, pronounced 'vehement'), Audubon's Conniff paused to reflect that, 'The trouble with this noble and self-sacrificing stance is that it almost always winds up being compromised so that some select group of other people gets wiped out'.

Some environmental leaders envision the millennial farewell as a revenge drama, in which the Earth as Hamlet skewers everybody who hasn't already poisoned themselves, through the law of unintended consequences. This demise was described by



that the extinction of Homo sapiens would mean survival for millions if not billions of other Earth-dwelling species', said a 1991 article in the fringy US environmentalist magazine *Wild Earth*.

Mainstream publications too have given the occasional nod to total annihilation. Noted eco-writer Richard Conniff admitted in a 1990 *Audubon* magazine article that, 'Among environmentalists sharing two or three beers, the notion is quite common that if only some

eco-writer Rik Scarce in his book *Eco-Warriors*: 'Most radical environmentalists assume an uncharacteristic air of pessimism when asked about the world 15 or 20 years from now. Judi Bari [of Earth First!] puts the consensus position succinctly: "I believe the Earth is going to rise up and throw us off...The Earth's failure to be able to sustain this kind of life will cause it to collapse. I'm sure life will survive that, but I don't think that humans will. I don't know if we deserve to."'

Lately even some respectable

scientists have come to embrace the Earth-as-Hamlet scenario. For example, David M Graber, a research biologist employed by the US National Park Service, wrote in his book review of Bill McKibben's *The End of Nature* for the *Los Angeles Times*: 'Human happiness, and certainly human fecundity, are not as important as a wild and healthy planet. I know social scientists who remind me that people are part of nature, but it isn't true. Somewhere along the line—at about a billion years ago—we quit the contract and became a cancer. We have become a plague upon ourselves and upon the Earth. It is cosmically unlikely that the developed world will choose to end its orgy of fossil energy consumption, and the third world its suicidal consumption of landscape. Until such time as Homo sapiens should decide to rejoin nature, some of us can only hope for the right virus to come along.'

Tom Clancy's best-selling novel, *Rainbow Six*, recently cashed in on the virus idea in a Götterdämmerung scenario. It unfolds the vengeful tale of a wealthy environmentalist whose pharmaceutical firm genetically engineers a doomsday virus. He hatches a diabolically perfect plan to use it against every last human being on Earth—except for a few hundred immunised fellow environmentalists, who are to live on in a secret fortress and watch nature 're-wild' itself. Will Clancy's dauntless hero, John Clark (the 'Six' or head man, in spy jargon) of Rainbow (his hush-hush international anti-terrorist unit based in Hereford) uncover the plot in time to save the world?

Something is askew when environmentalist annihilation can be contemplated with equanimity as mass-market entertainment. But perhaps that's the only way the public will ever see through the phony health worries, hollow compassion and cod-socialist proposals of so many environmental groups today. ●

Ron Arnold is author of *Ecoterror: the violent agenda to save nature*, published by Merril Press

Fiona Fox of the Catholic aid agency CAFOD questions the Western preoccupation with population control

Who says there are too many Africans?

As we approach the new millennium, fears about the planet's capacity to cope with the growing number of people have resurfaced. While the most recent United Nations report recorded a decline in the rate of population growth, the fact that the actual numbers continue to rise was enough to send sections of the press into a familiar frenzy about 'timebombs' and threats to the Earth's finite resources.

The equation is clear. More people and more consumption mean an increase in environmental degradation and poverty. To slow down environmental degradation and reduce world poverty, we must reduce overall consumption by reducing population growth. What could be more straightforward?

Yet the assumption that population growth will always cause environmental destruction is unproven. In some cases it does, in others the opposite is the case. For example, one study by Mortimore et al (1993) showed how decades of land erosion in the Machakos district of Kenya had been reversed by building terracing to retain moisture—a labour-intensive agricultural method made possible only by a fivefold increase in population over 60 years.

It is shocking that at the dawn of the new millennium, the population doomsters appear to rule out technological developments which would reduce environmental degradation and poverty. In the same week that the UN report was published, newspapers ran a story about the discovery of a source of frozen fuel under the seabed that could power the entire planet for centuries. Whatever you think of the ethics of genetic engineering in agriculture, the prospect of drought-resistant crops could open up amazing new possibilities for stricken African farmers.

It is also surprising that fears of the catastrophic consequences of population growth have proved so durable in the face of compelling evidence that humanity is capable of adapting. From Malthus in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, to modern-day Malthusians like the environmentalist Paul Ehrlich, the assumption that population growth will outstrip food production has bred grim predictions of widespread famine. In fact, such famines as we see today, like that in Sudan this summer, are a product of war rather than ecological collapse. The evidence that mass starvation is avoidable and will probably be avoided gets more convincing, not less.

In other areas too there have been radical improvements in life in the developing world. Mortality rates of young children living in the

third world are almost half what they were 50 years ago. The number of people with direct access to safe water has doubled in 50 years and life expectancy in the third world has increased from 41 to 62 in the same period. While nobody who has visited Africa would suggest that poverty has disappeared, there is evidence that, alongside a growing population, development is improving life for many.

That fears about population growth are a Western preoccupation became clear to me on my first visits to Africa. Apart from the fact that in Kenya, Uganda and Sudan I travelled through vast expanses of land without seeing a single human being, not one person I have met in Africa has complained about too many people. In fact most African women instantly

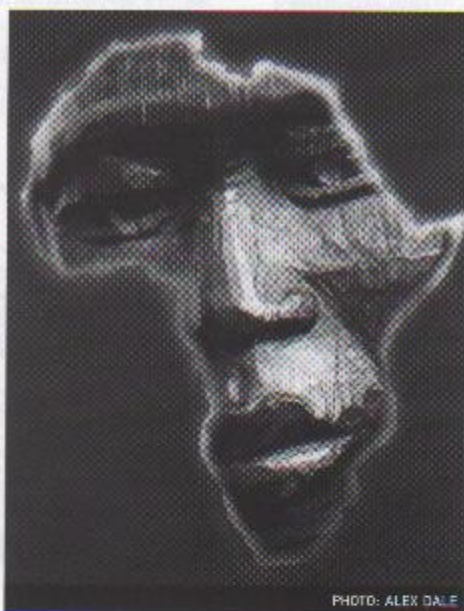


PHOTO: ALEX DALE

offer me sympathy on discovering that I am still childless at 34. In a continent where few have the kind of lifestyle, career options and welfare arrangements that we have, family life and children assume an added importance.

In southern Sudan, way before the current famine, a doctor told me that the most common complaint from his female patients is infertility. He explained that few of these women were actually infertile, but they were desperate to get pregnant quickly before their husbands went off to war. Widows who survived the massacres in Rwanda in 1994 expressed great sadness that losing their husbands meant losing their chance of having more children. While the war in Sudan, the

tidal wave in Papua New Guinea and the AIDS pandemic in Africa have killed countless children, Western commentators continue to talk about the need to reduce the number of children in the third world.

The only aid programmes guaranteed to be consistently fully funded are those which include an element of population control. This year USAID (the equivalent of Britain's Department for International Development) has given Kenya \$13.5 million for family planning, compared to \$4 million in humanitarian assistance. While AIDS victims can only dream about antibiotics and AZT, clinics in the most remote rural areas are stocked up with pills, coils and other contraceptives.

Anybody who has visited refugee camps in Africa will agree that one family forced to live in these conditions is one too many. But reports that the UN agencies are planning to supply these camps with manual vacuum aspiration equipment to allow abortions to be carried out on site are shocking. What exactly are we saying to these refugees? They have lost everything—their homes, their income and their dignity. Is access to abortion carried out by unqualified staff in unsanitary conditions really the best we can offer them?

Nor is there convincing evidence that the provision of family planning will on its own lead to a reduction in population growth. In Pakistan a \$50 million family-planning programme introduced in the late 1980s had virtually no impact on the birth rate and resulted only in massive stockpiles of unused contraceptives.

The key to reducing family sizes is social and economic development. Smaller families are a product of urban and industrialised societies. Last month the media carried reports of a young professional couple in Britain who want to freeze an embryo to allow them to delay parenthood while pursuing their careers. Meanwhile in rural Africa, women are having large families to help increase their family income and provide a safety net in their old age.

The expansion of the population over the past 200 years has coincided with an historic improvement in the quality of life for those of us born in the rich North. Let's hope that the new millennium sees the poor countries of the world integrated into the international economy in a way that allows them to share in these benefits. ●

Fiona Fox is head of media relations at CAFOD, the official development agency of the Catholic Church in England and Wales

THE TRUTH ABOUT LM

Seen all the recent allegations about LM magazine in the papers? Mick Hume sets the record straight

1 'LM is funded by the Serbs/big business/the far right/ a South African millionaire/the bogeyman'

In public our accusers are always careful only to imply that LM has secret and suspect financial links. Richard Tait, editor-in-chief of ITN, winks that the supposedly 'poor' LM is really a 'glossy and apparently well-funded magazine' (*Times*, 23 October). *Guardian* columnist George Monbiot notes that, despite its small size, the 'professional...glossy' magazine 'seems to have no shortage of money' (*Prospect*, November). Nick Cohen of the *Observer* calls LM 'corporate Marxists' and hints that 'the links with the corporations are not merely ideological' (25 October).

In private, however, LM's critics allow their imaginations to run free, spreading all manner of rumours about exactly where our money comes from.

Why have they so far fought shy of making their damning allegations in print, instead using 'glossy' as a code word? Because nobody has ever been able to produce a scrap of real evidence to substantiate these claims.

LM is an independent magazine not tied to any political party in the UK. (The Revolutionary Communist Party, which originally published the magazine as *Living Marxism*, was wound up by its members and the revamped LM was launched in February 1997.) While LM would welcome financial donations from any freedom-loving individual, it is not funded by any foreign party or government, nor by the 'loony right', big business, a South African millionaire or any of the other rumoured dodgy sources.

vice president of the Centre for the Defence of Free Enterprise; ii) two more frequent LM contributors who appeared in the Channel 4 documentary series *Against Nature* last year 'rubbed shoulders with' three right-wing American libertarians—that is, they were in the same film, although their shoulders never actually touched; iii) errr, that's it.

Contrary to Monbiot's assertion, LM has no 'association with overtly right-wing organisations'. What the magazine does have, however, is an open-door policy on contributors; if they have something interesting to say, we will consider publishing them. I do not accept responsibility for all of their ideas and affiliations, any more than the editor of the *Guardian* or *Observer* would for their contributors. It is a worrying sign of the times that LM's commitment to open debate should now be considered extreme.

One reason why LM publishes the occasional article by right-wing libertarians is because, as James Heartfield recently argued, 'the special contribution of the left in politics today is a diatribe against individual freedom' ('A free country?', November). The fact that we have to get somebody like Ron Arnold to criticise the anti-human strain in environmentalism should surely embarrass the authoritarian left, not LM.

3 'LM is behind lying TV documentaries'

The three-part documentary series *Against Nature*, broadcast last year on Channel Four, features in all of the recent anti-LM articles and rumours. The allegation is that what Nick Cohen calls 'the LM gang'



If anybody can publish conclusive proof to the contrary, I will pay double the amount they find into their personal bank account.

Contrary to the impression given by Tait and Monbiot, LM is always short of money. (Ask our underpaid skeleton staff, or our contributors, none of whom receives a penny.) The libel case brought against LM by ITN has already cost us around £50 000 of hard-raised funds.

LM survives because, in addition to normal sales and our successful events, people who believe in what the magazine is trying to do make regular donations to keep it going. If you want to become a Friend of LM, see the inside front cover. We need all the Friends we can get.

2 'LM is in league with the far right'

We have long been told that George Monbiot has done serious research to support this allegation. As far as I can tell, the evidence he has dug up is: i) Ron Arnold, an American libertarian who wrote one article for LM last year (and another in this issue) is, among other things,

was somehow responsible for these programmes, which supposedly broadcast lies about the green movement, for which the producers were roundly condemned by the Independent Television Commission.

The *Against Nature* series did raise a lot of interesting criticisms of environmentalist ideas, which predictably had many greens up in arms. George Monbiot claims that 'in response to thousands of complaints' the ITC handed down a 'damning' ruling. In fact the ITC's own summary records 'complaints from 151 viewers (4 upheld)'. The four upheld were from environmentalists who appeared in the programmes, who complained that they had been selectively quoted and had not been told that the series would be critical of their views.

It is possible to adopt different views on a series like *Against Nature*. One thing for certain, however, is that for better or worse, LM's input into it was nil.

Anybody who has read LM will know that the magazine is never shy of broadcasting its point of view, however controversial. The notion that LM would somehow hold back from publicising itself, or would deny it was responsible for a TV series that it had made, is truly bizarre.

Why, demand Monbiot and his echo Cohen, did the programmes not announce that Frank Furedi (who appeared as author of *Population and Development*) and John Gillott (who appeared as author of *Science and the Retreat from Reason*) also contribute articles to *LM*? One might just as well ask why the *Observer* does not declare Nick Cohen's association with Roy Hattersley's think-tank Catalyst before publishing his column each week. Perhaps nobody should be allowed to appear in the media without first answering the question, 'Are you, or have you ever been, a contributor to *LM*?'.

4 'LM is pro-Serb'

The critics claim that I am embroiled in a libel case with ITN because of our contributors' efforts to, in George Monbiot's words, 'explain away Serb atrocities in the pages of *LM*'. In fact *LM* has never sought to 'explain away' anything. Nor has the magazine ever taken anybody's side in the civil conflicts in the former Yugoslavia.

'The picture that fooled the world', published in the February 1997 issue of *LM*, raised important questions about ITN's award-winning pictures of an emaciated Bosnian Muslim, apparently caged behind a barbed-wire fence in the Bosnian Serb-run Trnopolje camp in August 1992. The central reason why we published Thomas Deichmann's article, and have stood by it in the face of ITN's libel writs, has little to do with the Serbs or Bosnia as such.

By Nick
Cohen



Full Marvel
if you
let
beg
star

Living Marxism associates
with a number of overtly
right-wing organisations—
it is all rather mysterious

PHOTOMONTAGE: AC/DC

Rather, the article (and subsequently the case) has provided a focus for *LM*'s concerns about two broader issues: the way in which the drawing of inappropriate parallels between the Second World War and the Bosnian conflict risks belittling the unique horrors of the Holocaust; and the degradation of journalistic standards in war reporting.

As for the Herr Deichmann, he may be, as Monbiot says, 'an engineer by training, not a journalist'; but 'The picture that fooled the world' is a great investigative story of which even a former fellow of Green College, Oxford like George could be proud.

For the article and everything else you could want to know about the libel case, see the website at <http://www.informinc.co.uk/ITN-vs-LM/>

5 'LM is "well written and cleverly edited" (*Guardian*)

Guilty as charged.



THE RELUCTANT PLAINTIFF

by Helen Searls

When ITN served *LM* magazine with a writ for libel at the end of January 1997, editor-in-chief Richard Tait's message on his staff noticeboard announced that, 'We are taking legal action against *LM* and look forward to confronting Mr Deichmann and the magazine in a court of law over their outrageous allegations'.

But as the months have gone by ITN appears less keen. Since the writ effectively squeezed the story out of the British press, the plaintiffs have done little to press their action on. Indeed, looking at the delays and diversionary tactics employed, one might even be forgiven for thinking that the crusading corporation is reluctant to go to court.

The first delay was the late serving of the Statement of Claim—an important document which outlines the exact charge against the defendant. ITN, however, was unable to spell out its complaint against *LM* for weeks because one of the journalists involved 'was on holiday in the Far East, and thereafter involved in the coverage of the death of the Chinese leader in Beijing' (Letter from ITN's solicitors, Biddle & Co, 28 February 1997). While waiting for the Statement of Claim, ITN's lawyers did manage to scare off *LM*'s printers with the threats of a libel writ and also had time to sue Two Ten Communications—the newswire company that ran *LM*'s press release.

The Statement of Claim, however, was positively speedy in comparison to the time it took for the plaintiff to serve the Reply to *LM*'s Defence. On 15 May 1997 ITN's lawyers requested an extension of four weeks due to the fact that their 'clients need to cover the general election'. The Reply eventually arrived three months late on 14 July 1997. But rather than replying to the particulars outlined in *LM*'s Defence, ITN's document cited 20 pages of 'evidence'—mainly old magazine articles—that *LM* magazine was 'actuated by malice'.

On 19 September 1997 ITN approached *LM* to settle the case but only on the basis that the defendants promise never to repeat the allegation, apologise in open court and pay the plaintiffs' costs. When *LM* refused to give in, the case effectively went to sleep for the winter. Despite a summons hearing in September 1997, where the court laid down dates for exchange of documents and statements, all deadlines were missed by many months. Documents were not exchanged until spring 1998. *LM* was never given a clear explanation as to why ITN found it so hard to copy videotapes and photocopy articles.

When *LM*'s solicitor suggested a new date for exchange of witness statements in June 1998, ITN asked for a further delay because its witnesses 'are, unfortunately, scattered around the globe at present (South Africa, Russia, Far East)' (1 July 1998). To date there has been no movement. It seems to take a lot longer than 80 days for ITN journalists to circumvent the globe.

And when *LM*'s lawyers recently pressed the plaintiffs for further and better particulars of their Reply, ITN refused to answer *LM*'s questions. The fact that nearly two years on ITN refuses to clarify its attitude to an essential point—namely whether or not its journalists, rather than the Bosnian Muslims, were behind the barbed-wire fence—means that the precise nature of the case against *LM* remains unclear. At the time of writing *LM* is threatening ITN with a summons if the particulars are not provided. We could even become one of the few defendants to go to court to make the plaintiff sue us.



SF: NO

The idea of the post-
end of the millenniu

There is, of course, still a chance that human society will actually have a perfectly tolerable future—but while nobody can quite believe it, there can be no future in, and perhaps for, serious speculative fiction.' (Brian Stableford, "Traces of a lost genre", *Interzone*, July 1998)

Science fiction, like society, faces a dark future: unknown, and probably unpleasant. SF writers have responded by focusing on almost everything except a near future of doom and gloom. The most striking expression of this tendency lies outside SF altogether, in the rise of the fantasy genre. Fantasy has its own value and validity, but fundamentally it responds to change by turning to an imaginary past.

Some SF writers, like Peter F Hamilton, look forward to a resurgent capitalist future beyond the present crisis. Others, like the Australian writer Greg Egan, focus hard on the cutting edge of current science and take it past a lightly sketched—disastrous—twenty-first century to a brighter world of humanity's AI progeny. Paul J McCauley's *Fairyland* confronts the near future head-on, but in his most recent work he too turns to a post-human world of conscious machines millions of years hence. Jack Womack's explicitly post-Soviet *Let's Put the Future Behind Us* exemplifies another response—to examine a displaced present rather than a near, or far, future.

Alternate histories and self-conscious pastiche (Stephen Baxter's *The Time Ships*, *Voyage* and others) are a common way of side-stepping the

future, however interesting and exciting such tales may be in themselves. Kim Stanley Robinson stands out in that his ambitious Mars trilogy is set in a future which grows out of the present: his long-lived characters, if real, would be already born. The bravura of Iain M Banks' communist-utopian Culture novels—mostly drafted in the seventies, published in the eighties—has gradually given way to darker, post-human visions as his youthful backlist has cleared.

The idea of the post-human sets the agenda of nineties SF. Whether it's in genetic miscegeny with aliens (Octavia Butler, Gwyneth Jones) or in the emergence of self-aware artificial intelligence (most of the rest of us), post-humanism connotes a continued confidence in technological and scientific progress combined with a scepticism about the capacity of humanity to power it. The torch of progress must be handed on to better minds and stronger hands than ours. It may not be too fanciful to see this as a reflection of a society where technical progress—albeit fitful—coexists uneasily with social stagnation.

To see the depth of the contrast we must look back to when the future seemed bright. What the SF critic John Clute has aptly called Agenda SF flourished from the 1920s to the late 1950s. Although inevitably tracking the vicissitudes of boom, slump, world war and Cold War, and encompassing many developments of literary style and scientific/technological speculation, Agenda SF retained its coherence as an ongoing projection of humanity's—and capitalism's—advance.

The consensus stages of this 'future history' included first the

NO FUTURE IN IT?

Post-human sets the agenda for science fiction at the millennium, says Ken MacLeod

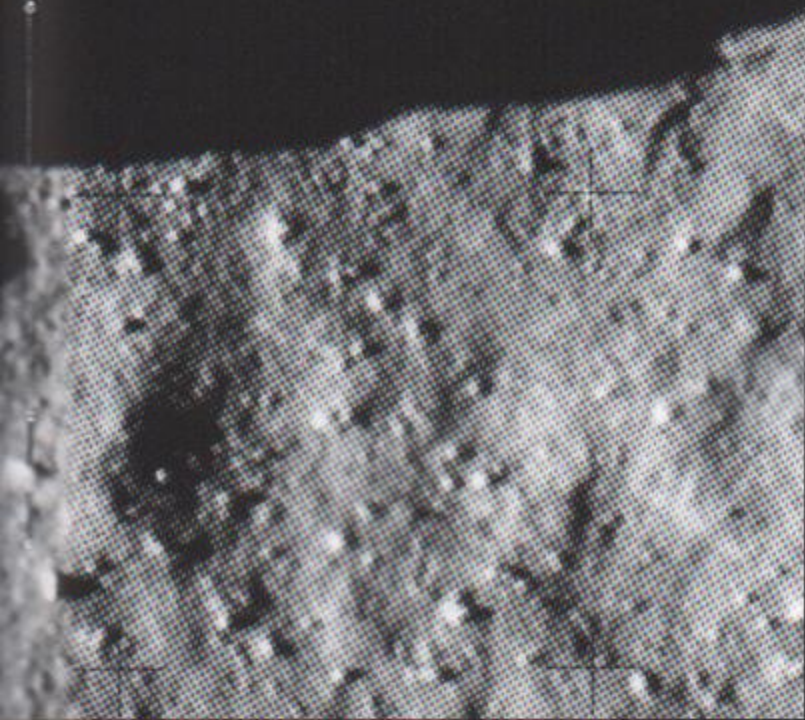


PHOTO: NASA

exploration, then the colonisation of the solar system; the launching of gigantic 'interstellar arks', with generations living and dying en route to Alpha Centauri, until some future Edison/Einstein cracked the intractable problem of the light-speed limit. A great explosion of human pioneers would swarm across the galaxy and be eventually unified into an Empire which would, inevitably, Decline and Fall...and beyond this Fall, new heights would rise.

It's cheap to laugh. For all its blind spots, Agenda SF's agenda had a grandeur and ambition which can still inspire. John Clute himself dates its decline from Sputnik—the moment when it became apparent that Agenda SF had been telling the wrong story, that the space age had arrived and it was a sight more complicated, messy and political than its 'prediction' had allowed for. I think the real change came in the 1960s with what became known as the New Wave.

New Wave SF grew out of the realisation that the 'decadent future societies', glanced at and frowned upon in the backdrops of Agenda SF, had already arrived. Sex and drugs and rock'n'roll, the Vietnam War, the strange sixties notion that linked the birth-control pill to fears of over-population, all became more important determinants of what went on in SF than the increasingly expensive and bureaucratic manned space programme.

Society or psyche became the venues for exploration—'inner space', with outer space as backdrop. Writers like JG Ballard, Michael Moorcock and M John Harrison consciously despised then-existing

SF for what they saw as its unthinking optimism, its clichés, its cardboard characters and, above all, its blindness to what was actually going on around it. How could anybody, in clear conscience, write tales of colonial conquest in space when the USA, the very society which was being held up as a model for the whole human future, was bogged down in a long, dirty, losing colonial war in Vietnam?

One of Ballard's short stories, 'The killing grounds', sketched a British NLF fighting US occupiers in a world which has become 'a global insurrectionary torch, a world Vietnam'. Moorcock's Jerry Cornelius stories eventually became an exploration of the joys and sorrows of life in the decadent heartlands, which, even in its length, weighed in impressively against the Foundation trilogies of yesteryear. Harrison scavenged fantasy, space opera and social realism, and caught the doom and gloom of early seventies, late-Labour Britain in his finest short story, 'Running down'. The title says it all.

But the New Wave ran into the same barrier as the old SF—its future arrived. The postwar economic boom which, in retrospect, suffuses with sunlight even the most entropic and pessimistic tales of that period, faded out. (John Brunner's *Stand on Zanzibar*, published in 1969, set in 2010, brilliantly depicts an appalling world which is actually much better than the one we live in now, let alone the one which, 12 years from now, we are likely to get.) The New Wave collapsed in a dribble of exhausted froth.

Other developments—the rise of self-consciously 'hard SF' which didn't fudge the physics—failed to reignite the genre's engines. The late seventies and early eighties were pretty dire—in SF, and in the world. Almost as soon as that recession was over, and the destruction of swathes of manufacturing industry 'paid off' in a financial and services boom with its consequent proliferation of computer/communications technology, the SF genre came up with an equivalent response: cyberpunk. William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984) is as good a benchmark as any.

Gibson knew almost nothing about computers, but he wrote about them the way their users and programmers thought about them—containing spaces you could get into, problems you could tunnel under, traps you could work around. Inner space joined outer space as backdrop; Gibson's characters, and those of cyberpunk generally, struck an almost sociopathically affectless pose. The real action was inside the computers, in...cyberspace.

'Cyberspace', a word coined in Gibson's novel, is now common currency, and the cyberpunk world a common image: the 'future noir' of *Blade Runner* and *Johnny Mnemonic*, dominated by mega-corporations and policed by their ninja hitmen. Government is irrelevant, the environment a lost cause: 'The sky above the port was the color of television, tuned to a dead channel' is *Neuromancer's* first line, and last word on that particular subject.

And cyberpunk, in its turn...but you're ahead of me, right? The world of the internet, the web and the fall of the Wall made it, too, a told tale. As William Gibson puts it: 'The best SF of the nineties is on CNN. Hard to beat that garbage-module slamming into space station Mir!' Indeed the cooperation between Russia and the West on the Mir space station may be the perfect symbol for the present state of affairs: actually existing capitalism relying for its life-support on the clapped-out projects of formerly existing socialism, lurching from one crisis to another and going around in circles.

Which brings us to now. There is no future in post-humanism. The problem in the real world remains one of human agency. There are no saviours from above, no angels or aliens to save us. And, for sure, there is none behind the computer screens. Artificial awareness is where it's been since the 1940s and always will be: 'just 20 years away.' The better minds and stronger hands must be our own.

SF still has the capacity to advance—its literary and scientific sophistication is in many respects better than it has ever been. And if it reflects a stalled and fragmented world, it also, as we peer through our own reflections, continues to give us glimpses of the world beyond that wall of glass through which—with hard work and a bit of luck—we may yet break.

Let's not put the future behind us.

Ken MacLeod is author of *The Star Fraction*, shortlisted for the Arthur C Clarke Award, and *The Stone Canal*. His latest novel, *The Cassini Division*, is published by Little, Brown

The SF future is female

Women's science fiction can provide a more positive alternative to the general doom and gloom, argues Pat Wheeler

At the end of the millennium the most significant trend in science fiction is the pre-eminence of dystopian futures and the disappearance of utopian fiction. However, novels by women science fiction writers can often be more optimistic. They contemplate possible future worlds in highly creative ways, often seeking a negation of social and political boundaries.

In *Passing for Human* Jodie Scott creates a future visited by a race of alien sociologists and scientists, served by hundreds of Richard Nixon androids. They are determining whether the Earth should be allowed to survive, and quickly grasp the basics of Earth life: 'defending self loudly; keeping the finger of blame pointed at others; selling out to the highest bidder while in the very act of boasting own loyalty.' A female sociologist of the species wishes to save Earth from annihilation. 'They're improving', she says, 'soon they'll have abandoned the profit system'. Obviously worth saving then!

Maureen F McHugh's *China Mountain Zhang* explores diversely imagined future cultures, in a world where the People's Republic of China is the dominant power. McHugh draws on a clutch of creative ideas ranging from organic engineering to architects who 'imagine' biotic, natural houses. She gives the reader an illicit computer game capable of giving orgasmic pleasure, and the ability to modify one's looks to fit in. In her future there is still racism and sexism, but McHugh extrapolates positive elements from the end of the twentieth century to take them further into the future.

In contrast, *Rock'N'Roll Babes from Outer Space* by Linda Jaivin offers a satirical examination of popular culture at the end of the twentieth century. Planet-hopping aliens Baby, Doll and Lati touch down in Australia, 'shapeshift' into beautiful babes and set about experiencing sex, drugs and rock'n'roll. Acquiring the art of shapeshifting is not easy, as all they can manage at first is to change into Keith Richards. While advocating diverse gender, race and sexual roles the

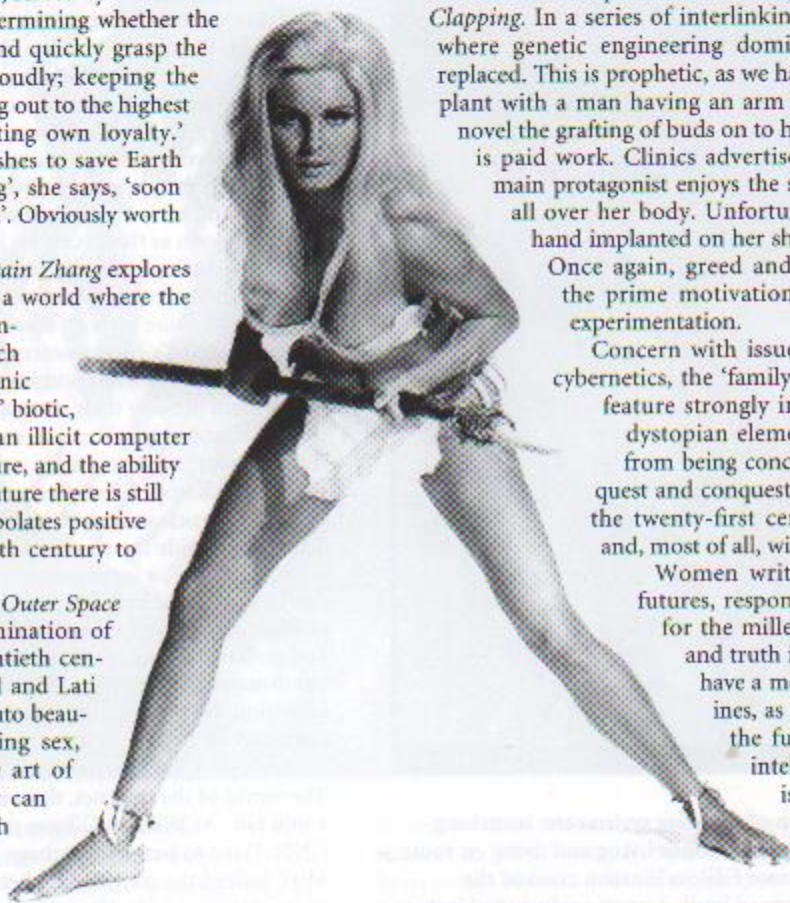
alien babes secure an acceptance of 'difference' from the people with whom they come into contact. On the way to hedonistic pleasures they manage to change the world by accidentally causing the meteorite Eros to explode, showering fragments of love all over the globe. One of the final scenes shows Australian MPs in Canberra, throwing off their clothes and 'doing to each other what they have been doing to the electorate for years'.

Lise Leroux has produced a strange, evocative book, *One Hand Clapping*. In a series of interlinking stories she imagines a future where genetic engineering dominates and body parts can be replaced. This is prophetic, as we have just seen the first limb transplant with a man having an arm grafted on to his body. In this novel the grafting of buds on to humans to grow spare body parts is paid work. Clinics advertise on television for clients. The main protagonist enjoys the sensation of body parts growing all over her body. Unfortunately she falls in love with the hand implanted on her shoulder, but that's another story. Once again, greed and exploitation are shown to be the prime motivations behind medical and genetic experimentation.

Concern with issues such as genetic engineering, cybernetics, the 'family' unit, pollution and capitalism feature strongly in women's science fiction. The dystopian element is certainly evident, but far from being concerned with militaristic tropes of quest and conquest, women are looking forward to the twenty-first century with optimism, humour and, most of all, with imagination.

Women writers are speculating on diverse futures, responding to the gloomy predictions for the millennium by pursuing knowledge and truth in more positive ways. If women have a more symbiotic approach to machines, as Sadie Plant recently argued, then the future, where machine, artificial intelligence and human are integral, is most definitely female. ●

Pat Wheeler is a lecturer in contemporary fiction



Fantasy worlds

There is a scene in an Iain M Banks' science fiction story where the hero is imprisoned in an underground room connected up to the sewage pipes of his captor's immense house. The idea is that, after a vast, rich banquet upstairs, the guests' visits to the toilet will see him off. Most of science fiction (SF) and its successor, fantasy fiction (FF), makes you feel an empathy with Banks' hero.

Readers of SF might disagree as to who the great names are, but all will accept that most SF is rubbish; Cold War claptrap, or the rankest soap opera, seeped through with fear and hatred of all things alien. Those of worth shine like diamonds in the dung heap.

Even worse is FF, all about kings, princesses, wizards, witches and dragons. The wizard's apprentice, or youngest son of the smallholder, seeks the hand of the princess; the middle class dream of upward mobility (don't hold your breath!). Where SF has demonstrated man's ability to foresee a future free from the confines of nature, FF demonstrates only a fearful retreat from the future. These are modern fairy stories for today's adults/children.

SF has always been my light reading. Librarians today attach little stickers with pictures to the backs of books so that borrowers can see what type of book it is (well, we wouldn't know otherwise!). SF has a little rocket, FF a little dragon. The ratio of FF to SF in my local libraries is now over 80:20.

When the bulk of your favourite reading matter now competes in its awfulness with Sky movies (don't mention the dreaded Sci-Fi Channel) it can get pretty depressing. At least Kim Stanley Robinson (*Red Mars*, *Green Mars* and *Blue Mars*) and Ken MacLeod (*The Star Fraction*, *The Stone Canal* and *The Cassini Division*) are holding the line against the nerds and the wankers.

Dave Hallsworth

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Gal détourn puts 'the great rock'n'roll dwindle' in perspective

Who killed Bambi?

Music no longer plays the role in young people's lives that it used to. Alan McGee, head of Creation Records, claims 'there is a crisis in the music industry and it's so huge that nobody knows it's happening'. The *NME* referred to this 'crisis' as 'The great rock'n'roll dwindle', and numerous 'indie' stalwarts rushed to join the lament.

They blame bands for being too careerist, the industry for killing off non-star sellers too quickly, a range of consumer choices for stealing potential music devotees, and even childless baby boomers for not producing enough

around but they are mainstream now, clowns rather than folk devils, who can buy their hair dye from Boots instead of waiting for it to arrive in plain wrapping. Some music journalists have tried to recreate the movements they just missed out on; but the 'new wave of new wave', 'new wave of new mod' and, worst of all, 'Romo', all floundered due to their inability to appeal to the mainstream.

The fact is that the mainstream is expanding while the grassroots music scene has become a stagnant talent pool, from which the major record labels can fish out the odd wet corpse for high street consumption.

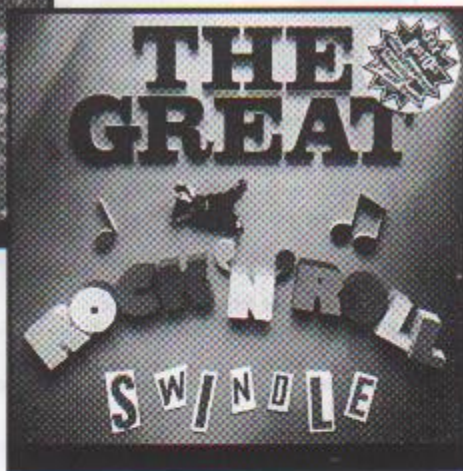
The top 20 albums of the year so far give a snapshot of the musical landscape. Girl groups, boy groups, adult balladeers and lightweight pop sit next to more 'credible' bands like Radiohead, The Verve and Massive Attack. It's always been the way: okay sits next to dull sits next to duller. The only difference now is that the underbelly is disappearing; this is why record companies



of the little buggers in the first place. But the music industry is not dying. Industry figures reveal a relatively healthy home market and strong exports of British artists, making it still one of the highest-earning industries in the country. So why the angst?

Indie; alternative; underground; 'authentic'. Call it what you want. It is a stiffening corpse. The kind of music that Alan McGee grew up on and the *NME* has made a large part of its living from. The kind of music that angst-ridden sixth formers, students and rebel clotheshorses of all descriptions actually believed in, while sneering at the 'straights' for not embracing its truth. That kind of music has lost its spark and is disappearing. Cancelled festivals, poor indie sales, Warner's closing of Radar—a label intended for bands outside of the mainstream—as well as changes at Liverpool's Crash FM and London's Xfm, and the sharp decline in sales of *NME* and *Melody Maker*, all attest to the fact.

Gone are the days of music 'movements' like punk or mod. There are still 'freaks'



give huge advances to bands and expect quick returns—they are pitching artists in at a much higher level, knowing that mainstream pop is where the real money lies. The Verve's *Urban Hymns* has sold over two million in Britain. Indie acts who are lucky enough to be saved from that endless array of near-empty gigs in dodgy toilets which constitutes Britain's grassroots scene have a lot to live up to. Rebellion is no longer a big hit, and underground is just another word for loser.

There may be fewer young people and more consumer options, but why do young people *choose* not to identify with outsider or underground music? The lack of ideological contestation in society means that even the

atomised sixth-form rebellion of yesterday's pop movements no longer has instant identity appeal. Guitar-mangling, tinnitus-inducing, manifesto-wielding young upstarts seeking to rip a hole in the backside of contemporary culture are more likely to be seen as a joke by today's career-centred conformist students.

In its vague rejection of mainstream society, rebellious music reacted to the world that surrounded it by rejecting its 'straightness'. But when politics is reduced to administration and the establishment no longer cares if you have green hair and a pierced penis, rebel rock has little left to say. Even rap—a once-feisty beast—now has little to say about anything other than cars and women. Fair enough, but Chuck Berry got there in the 1950s. Today, the only whiffs of top ten 'sedition' we have—and those quotation marks are *extremely* important—are the cartoon sing-a-longs of Chumbawamba and the tits and vomit capers of Prodigy.

So where does this lead us? If we no longer require music to speak to us about our lives and our world, then all we are left with is sound. Without ideas, there is only shopping. There has been a closure of the imagination that can only be reversed when our cultural and political life is more antagonistic, dirty, dynamic, irreverent and intelligent. This, and not industry practices, the internet, demographic factors or other such fallacies, is the real point of concern.

However, we should not assume that a crowd of rebel rockers coming to save us would be anything to celebrate. Alternative music was rarely positive in the first place. It made a virtue out of shabbiness, celebrating individualism and victimhood at the expense of being an aspirational intellectual force. It perpetuated the 'idea of youth' as a separate lifestyle category, which meant that any rebellion could easily be presented as merely part of the eternal revolt of youth that recurs with each generation. We should be looking for more positive outlets for expression. Continual cultural change is healthy if we are not to live our lives by stone tablets; inevitably though, some people do cling to their vested interests and their nostalgia, very, very tightly.

But they shouldn't worry too much. The prevailing mood of caution and unease makes both nostalgia and sentimentality very marketable *mainstream* commodities. This ensures that traces of the 'real' deal, of a time when things were different, continue. A minority of bands will always be used for this purpose. The next Radiohead are probably unburdening themselves to three men and a dog in Camden right now. They too are probably consumed by a doom-laden, pre-millennial, angst-ridden concentration on the survival of *their* music. Somebody should tell them that the real issue is that if cultural shifts reflect wider society, then our society seems more passive, unopinionated and privatised than ever before—and it'll take more than a few distorted three-chord tricks to change it. That's the real dwindle. ●

ANN BRADLEY

Homicide

life in the sticks



One thing I like about today's American cop programmes, like *Homicide: life on the street* and *NYPD Blue*, is that they give a rather more honest account than their British counterparts of what police work is really like. Even the excellent *Prime Suspect* and *Inspector Morse* conform to the received view of what police work should be, rather than what it is.

British scriptwriters seem wedded to a rather curious old-fashioned view that detective work is about detection—wise police officers discover clues from which they deduce the solution to a heinous crime. The CID is pitted against criminal

likely suspect—preferably somebody who has a prior conviction for a similar offence, or has been a suspect in one. Second, prevent them from getting 'lawyered-up', thereby denying them professional advice. Thirdly, intimidate or beat a confession out of them. Fourthly, celebrate the fact that even if the collar was innocent of this offence, it doesn't matter because a 'piece of shit' has been taken off the street.

The confrontation of good and evil, right and wrong makes you feel good. Who, when watching Detective Simone cross-examine a suspect, worries about whether the doped-up guy who obviously murdered

at least that is what I thought until I saw the best tradition of American cop dramas enacted for real, through the arrest and conviction of Michael Stone for the brutal attack on Lynn Russell and her daughters. The development of the case against Stone could have been directed by Steven Bochco. A dramatic crime scene—mother, daughter and dog brutally butchered in idyllic Kent countryside. Surviving daughter battles against horrific injuries to recover sufficient power of speech to testify.

'Homicide: life in the village.' In the frame, nasty, mentally ill, heroin addict who, imprisoned for another offence, has allegedly confessed to a fellow inmate that he 'done it'. Everybody knew that one day he would murder somebody—he said he would, so it must be true. To the police, desperate for a conviction in a high-profile, high-sympathy case, Michael Stone must have seemed like an answer to a prayer. Everybody, the press, the public, the police, wanted him to be guilty. Could there have been a more convenient wrap-up? Until of course the big upset. Fellow prisoner is reported to have admitted to a newspaper that he lied about Stone's confession, suddenly all the evidence looks very circumstantial (no forensic, no clear identification, etc), and an appeal against the conviction has been issued.

Yet there is little or no public outcry for the evidence or the due process of law to be re-examined. Whether or not Stone actually murdered anybody on this occasion seems less important to the public debate than the fact that he is what *Scipowicz* might call a 'fucking piece of shit'. The world is better off without him on the streets.

'Convict without conviction' may make for excellent television, but it is bad law. Locking people up for what we imagine them to be is no substitute for solving a crime. Cynical American scriptwriters may be aware of this. The Kent police and the media which backed them seem to have lost the plot.

'Even if he's innocent of this crime, he is probably guilty of another'

intelligence. The police win when they are clever enough to outwit those who live outside decent society. The sop to contemporary realism is that, these days, the criminals sometimes win and sometimes the forces of law and order are shown for the corrupt shambles they sometimes are.

The American TV way is entirely different. Sure they have fictional traditions of detection, although much of it seems to be done in the courtroom rather than before the arrest. But in the main, police work is shown to be reducible to a set formula.

First, find somebody who seems a

the kids fully understands his Miranda rights? Yes, we know the evidence is purely circumstantial but it fits together and seems to make sense—and if it wasn't this piece of living scum, who was it? Okay, we know the main witness has every reason to lie. But who cares? Even if, by chance, the cops have got it wrong and he's innocent of this crime, he is probably guilty of another. Personally speaking, if my kid was harmed I would rather have *Scipowicz* on the case than any Oxford intellectual with a penchant for poetry and crossword puzzles.

WHY MEN NEED TO FEEL, TOO

Paul Colbert, editor of *ZM* magazine, thinks that men need to adopt a more feminised approach to health advice and self-help

Launching a new health magazine—especially one for men—gives you a fascinating insight into how different men and women's attitudes are towards advice.

Men don't like it.

Give them 'opportunities to learn' or 'information to collect' and they'll gleefully absorb the facts until closing time. But deliver anything that smacks of an instruction and their attention will swizzle back to the footie faster than you can say 'hand me the remote'.

How men come to terms with this educational reticence will have greater repercussions on their health in the next millennium than any number of medical initiatives.

Look at the different approach the sexes have towards breast and prostate cancers. There are more than 100 charities and organisations dealing with breast cancer, and while the annual death rate is still in the thousands, it's continuing to fall. At last count prostate cancer had just three

charities. Death rates are lower than for breast cancer, but still in the thousands—and rising speedily enough to make it one of the fastest growing male killers in the country.

I think this says as much about men's inability to communicate as it does about their disposition towards their health.

Over recent decades women have successfully mobilised their shared concerns about health and made it a joint force for good. They seem to have an innate ability to share experiences in a positive way. 'I've got a cold.' 'I had one last week and I tried taking zinc. It worked brilliantly for me.'

For a man the only reason you would share a health tale with a mate would be to make him gag on his beer with a medical horror story. All such tales have three rules. They have to be painful: 'my testicles resembled a golf ball and a King Edward in a pair of tights;' bizarre: 'usually it's something only bats catch;' and must conclude with a piece of voyeuristic triumphalism: 'three of the cooks came to have a look

because they'd heard the nurses talking about it in the canteen.'

Also men are a particularly strange breed of hypochondriac. They're always sicker than their women, but they won't go to the doctor, and they never take drugs. Perhaps it's because we think trooping off to the GP is a girly thing to do, and real men just tough it out until the bleeding stops. At least that's the traditional view. Now I'm not so sure. I think there's a much stronger element of fear in there than men are ready to confess to—the dread that there might actually be something wrong.

Lately men's magazines—even the drinking and leering varieties—have been telling men to feel around for signs of testicular cancer while they're in the bath. But the number of men I know who do it can, in fact, be counted on the testicles of one scrotum. We're too scared of finding something.

While our overall interest in our own health and fitness is thankfully on the

STRAW MEN

Dr Michael Fitzpatrick sees the booming men's health industry as a symptom of an unhealthy obsession

In the world of men's health magazines the stereotypical male is reticent, stoical and haughtily indifferent to exhortations to live a healthy lifestyle and to submit regularly to medical inspection. My first response is to wish that a few more like this would turn up at my surgery, in place of the intensely disease-aware and health-obsessed young men currently shuffling through the waiting-room doors.

Indeed I was beginning to think that the hard man who haunts the men's magazines had become extinct, when one turned up last month. He is a patient who comes very occasionally, when he thinks he needs some particular treatment. Now 75, he had a stroke some 10 years ago, leaving him paralysed down one side and scarcely able to speak. Though he is virtually confined to a wheelchair, he still insists on coming up to the surgery, assisted by his wife.

The effort required for such an outing—always complete with collar and tie and polished shoes—is clearly enormous. When I say that I would be happy to visit him, his wife just says, 'he likes to come'.

Yet so unusual has such an outlook become that he now seems to be a visitor from the distant past, if not from another planet.

For today's promoters of men's health, my patient manifests seriously disturbed behaviour. His reluctance to parade his distress indicates denial of his deeper emotional needs, and his insistence on getting dressed up and going out suggests an unhealthy perfectionist mentality, if not outright obsessional compulsive disorder. He is clearly in dire need of counselling.

As recently as 10 years ago, males between the ages of five and 65 were rarely seen in general practice. We mostly saw women and children, and old people, who are, of course, predominantly female. Now men, particularly young men, are frequent attendees (and earnest articles in the medical press suggest methods of persuading adolescents that they should join the queue).

The men's magazines often claim that they are following the trail blazed by the women's movement and demanding that health services become more responsive to their particular needs. In fact, in its early radical

phase, the women's movement regarded the world of medicine as patriarchal and oppressive and attempted to organise key aspects of women's healthcare autonomously. However, once the radical moment passed, this movement was rapidly incorporated by the medical establishment: the former samizdat handbook *Our Bodies Ourselves* can now be found on many GPs' shelves. What started out as a challenge to medical authority over women contributed to the evolution of a more comprehensive system for the medical regulation of women's lives—notably in the spheres of contraception, pregnancy, childbirth and in the promotion of screening tests of dubious efficacy such as cervical smears and mammography.

Lacking any radical impulse, the men's health magazines have taken the degraded end product of the women's health movement as their model. Far from challenging medical authority, they urge men to submit themselves to it on a greater scale than ever before. In choosing campaigning issues, advocates of men's health have proceeded by analogy with the feminists:

increase, there are still two big trigger points that bring our mortality emphatically home to us. 1) when we turn 30, 2) when we have kids.

For men no birthday is ever as bad as 30. It's the first one where we have to come to terms with no longer being as fit as we once were. The trend has turned downwards. And kids make us realise more than anything that exercise is our body's pension. We're no longer working out in order to have a flat stomach for the summer, we're working out so we can still play football with our son at 14, when we're aged—er, well, let's not go into that.

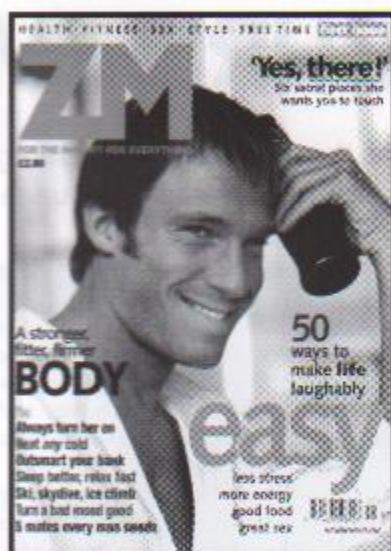
At ZM we've decided that our mission is to be the best health insurance a man can buy. And that insurance is information. Our job, as we move into the next millennium, is to find a way of delivering it that makes men pay attention, take action and not get scared.

But if there has been one question we've been asked during the making of ZM that's revealed the average man's true attitude towards his health and fitness it's this. 'You know those electronic pad things that you strap on to exercise your muscles while you're sitting still?' Yesss... 'Do they work?'

It's going to be an interesting future. ●

ZM, the men's health, fitness and lifestyle magazine, was launched by National Magazines in October

THE NUMBER OF MEN WHO EXAMINE THEMSELVES CAN BE COUNTED ON THE TESTICLES OF ONE SCROTUM



50 WAYS TO MAKE LIFE EASIER

If every day was 20 hours long, you'd still be late home to dinner. Doesn't matter how hard you work, spare time just doesn't seem to exist anymore. What you need are a few tricks that squeeze the best out of every minute. Here's 50 to put you on the fast-track towards more time, less hassle and an easier life.

● **Lighten up**
If you're always rushing around, you're probably not getting the most out of your day. Take a few minutes to relax and recharge your batteries. You'll be more productive when you get back to work.

● **Wash a quick bath**
A quick shower or bath can help you feel refreshed and energized. It's a simple way to start your day on a positive note.

SIX SECRET PLACES SHE WANTS YOU TO TOUCH

It may be good for her, but there are six secret places on a woman's body that men should know to be sure they're there. Read on, or you'll be about as blind as the rest of the world.

- 1. HER NECK**
The neck is a sensitive area and is often overlooked. A gentle touch here can be very soothing and relaxing.
- 2. HER CHEST**
The chest area is another sensitive spot. A light touch here can help her feel more comfortable and at ease.
- 3. HER SHOULDERS**
Shoulders are often tense and carrying a lot of stress. A firm touch here can help her relax and release tension.
- 4. HER HANDS**
Hands are often cold and dry. A warm touch here can be very comforting and help her feel more at ease.
- 5. HER ANKLES**
Ankles are often sore and tired. A gentle touch here can help her feel more relaxed and comfortable.
- 6. HER COCKLE**
The cockle is a very sensitive area and is often overlooked. A gentle touch here can be very soothing and relaxing.

Where the **bottom** joins the thighs is often considered a no-man's land — **wrong**

they had cervical smears—we demand prostate examinations; they can do breast self-examination—we can play pocket billiards.

The parallel between screening tests for cervical and prostatic cancer is richly

symbolic. Just as the smear test exposes women not merely to the medical gaze, but also to vaginal penetration, so the palpation of the prostate involves digital penetration of the male rectum. The slippery finger may be less impressive than the metal speculum,

but it is no less significant as an instrument of symbolic domination.

It is striking that long after medical authorities have accepted the uselessness of both breast and testicular self-examination, the popular health magazines continue to promote them. The extent of popular approval of these techniques—out of all proportion to any value they might have in reducing the impact of cancer—is a potent indicator of the pathological preoccupation with health in modern society.

When it's time for my old patient to go, he looks me in the eye and shakes hands—with the left because his right is paralysed. Here too the contrast with the modern male is striking. Modern man slouches out, in his shabby black and grey, his eyes cast downwards, avoiding a handshake or offering a feeble gesture in response. It strikes me that as the hard men die out, the new men have become rather like old women. ●

CHRISTMAS CRACKERS

As the counselling industry gears up for its busiest time of year, Yvonne McEwen says a lot of well people are being treated by a bunch of sick therapists

The men and women of science who, 100 years ago, defined psychology as the study of human behaviour would, I assume, be appalled at the way the discipline has developed. To be more accurate, it's the lack of discipline within psychology and psychiatry that is producing so much damage, mayhem and controversy.

The aspirations to understand the mystery of human behaviour have now deteriorated into a science with the same degree of accuracy as crystal-ball gazing and palmistry. We now have a definition and therapy for every emotion, sensation and experience. This type of simplified labelling can only lead to the death of science and humane, ethical practice.

If I spend too long in front of my computer I can be diagnosed as having 'computer and internet addiction disorder'. Should I decide to assault somebody on my way home I can claim 'commuting stress disorder'. If I make an obscene phonecall my lawyer can argue, with the help of a therapist, psychologist and counsellor, that I am suffering from 'telephone scatologia' (sounds more like a sexually transmitted disease).

The people that deal with our minds and behaviour seriously need to take stock of their own behaviour and motives. The psychological and allied professions need to get a grip on reality. What we now have in Western society is a lot of well people being treated by a bunch of sick therapists.

The following are classic examples from North America of how fatuous this profession has become.* A man in Canada was charged with the double murder of his wife's parents after he drove 15 miles across Toronto in the middle of the night. He was diagnosed as having 'sleepwalking disorder' and it was successfully used in his defence. A defence

lawyer in Milwaukee argued that a teenage girl charged with shooting dead another girl during an argument over a leather coat, suffered from 'cultural psychosis' which caused her to think that problems are resolved by guns. After two youths held up a bank manager's family at gunpoint and then went on to rob a pub manager, the psychologist alleged that they were suffering from 'desensitisation to television violence disorder'.

We don't have to look to North America for silly behaviour by the professionals. Our own lot have the same flair for inventiveness. There are people wanted for everything from road traffic violations to terrorist offences who have psychologists and psychiatrists claiming that they are suffering from traumatic stress. The emergency services are now capitalising on this absurd condition, with police officers, firefighters and paramedics claiming they have traumatic stress because they are traumatised by the jobs that they are called out to. Will the sick, injured, assaulted and robbed have to apologise to them for the traumatic stress that they are causing?

At Christmas stresses and strains are high. People are fraught, aggressive, tired and emotional: and then all those dreadful professionals come out with their sickly, homespun philosophies to tell us how to cope with the pressures.

The American *Little Book of Christmas Joys* gives us 432 things to do that will make the Yuletide season right for ourselves and others. Tip number 10 tells us to 'take a Christmas family photograph each year in the same spot, such as by a favourite tree in your garden. In years to come, you will have a wonderful record of the growth of your family, as well as the tree'. What happens if they are in the

family plot, pushing up the winter daisies? Not much of a photo opportunity there. Enter the therapist: they can probably arrange for a few cardboard cut outs so you won't be photographically, emotionally challenged.

Suggestion number 12 tells us to 'make an effort and attend every Christmas party that you have been invited to, even if you stay just a few minutes'. The American Psychological Association claims that the country has 25 000 000 alcoholics, while 80 000 000 suffer from the disease of 'co-alcoholism' and require treatment for being members of families of alcoholics. Perhaps it's not surprising considering hint number 12. But then, statistics lie.

Apart from the alcoholism there are many other 'conditions' and 'pathologies' which psychology and psychiatry are now 'concerned about'. According to some North American studies:*

- 20 million people are addicted to gambling
- 30 million women suffer from bulimia or anorexia
- 80 million people have eating disorders
- 75 million people are addicted to cigarettes
- 50 million people suffer from depression and anxiety
- 44 million women suffer from pre-menstrual syndrome
- 25 million people are sex addicts
- 5.6 million people have been abducted by UFOs
- 22 million people suffer from debilitating shyness
- 66 million people have experienced incest or sexual trauma
- 10 million people suffer from borderline personality disorder

No wonder the mental health people are worried: when you add it all up it is several times the population of North America. They must all have multiple pathologies! This is the type of worrying 'evidence' that gets churned out at every debate and funding crisis. Unfortunately, in Britain we use a lot of American statistics to back up our own lack of credible data.

Psychology is no longer a science and I have serious misgivings as to whether psychiatry ever was, or will be. What has evolved in the past 10 years particularly is the 'junk psychology' industry.

The areas of trauma and disaster management have seen the biggest rise in alleged mental health conditions. Here the evidence, statistics, therapies and theories have been entirely manipulated in favour of the therapist, counsellor,

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND ALLIED PROFESSIONS NEED TO GET A GRIP ON REALITY

traumatologist (cringe) and his or her dog.

Post-traumatic stress disorder: that's the condition that you can have diagnosed and be compensated for just by looking the wrong way for a bus. The experts tell us that 0.1 per cent of us will suffer this 'disturbing condition'. In the UK that's about 52 000 people by my calculations. What are we doing for them? We are building post-traumatic stress disorder clinics and units in hospitals. In fact we are so concerned (not to mention excited) about our new high-profile condition that we are shifting funds away from patients who would be better looked after had the professions not decided to reinvent themselves with this overused, over-abused, unscientifically proven condition.

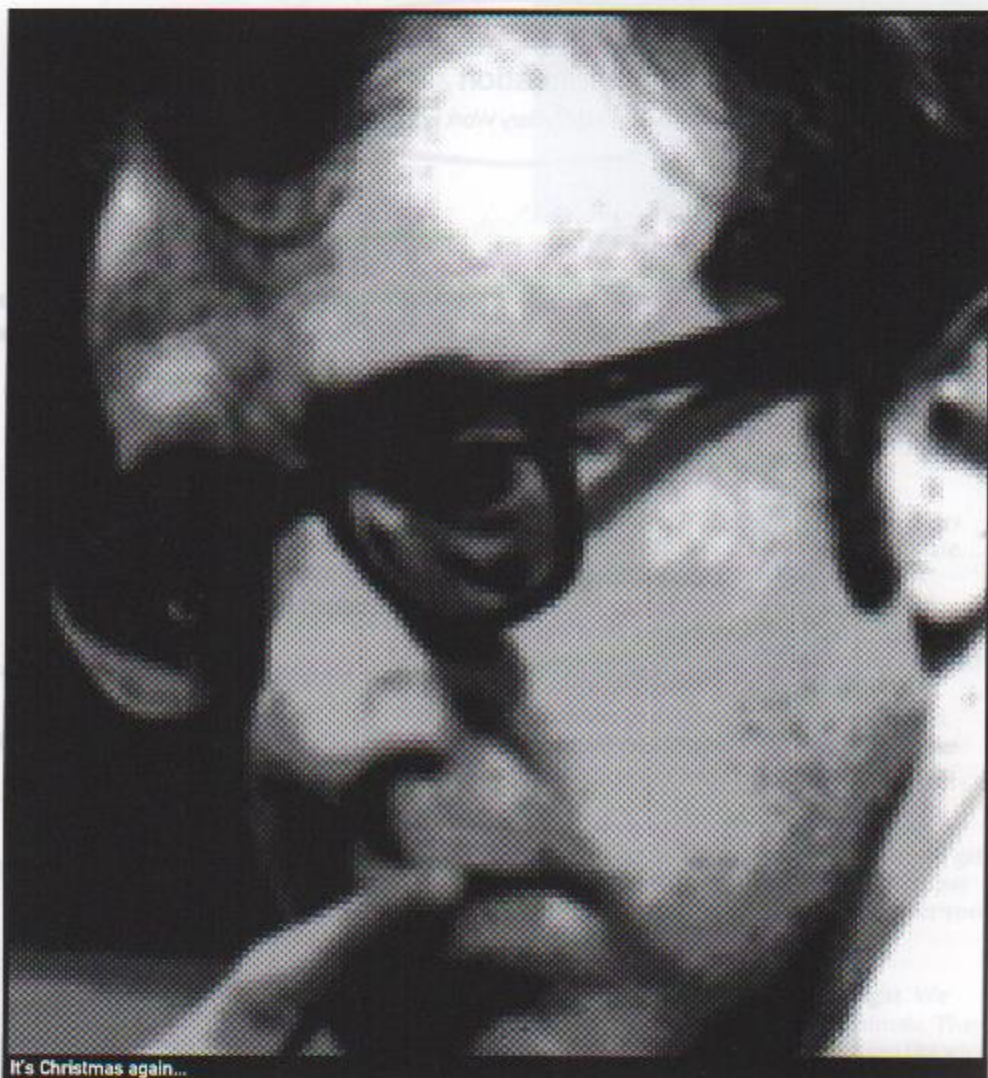
What we now have in our society is the manufacturing of victims. Real victims—who have suffered degradation, violence and the worst excesses of prejudice—are now being lumped in with the other categories. Their real suffering is being trivialised by professionals applying a catch-all, one-stop shop definition.

Fake victims are the ones who for reasons of low self-esteem, revenge or greed are prepared to con the system (usually supported by an expert opinion). The manufactured victims are produced by the junk psychology industry with all its exaggerated claims, wild theories and therapies.

How do we make these junk psychologists answerable for the damage and stigmatisation that they cause? Firstly we want to know who they really are—what kind of training, experience and regulation do they have? We should demand truth and advertising: a lot of them make claims that they can't support when challenged. We should stop the public sanctioning of them and no longer be prepared to accept theories as evidence.

As consumers of this growth industry we want the evidence. No more anecdotes that can have you put away for life, or your kids taken from you. And what about the career prospects and promotions being lost, insurance policies cancelled, mortgages and financing being denied and children lost in custody battles? These are just some of the effects that unproven theories can have on our lives and livelihoods.

I would like to leave you with one final thought on what this unscientific industry has become. Earlier this year a well-known 'trauma expert' wrote to colleagues around the world about his concerns that there was no known cure for post-traumatic stress disorder. (That will be news to the insurance companies that are paying for 'treatment'.)



It's Christmas again...

Thanks to the help and response of his enthusiastic colleagues he was able to come up with a therapy that will revolutionise treatment.

- 1 First, think of a distressing event and work up as much discomfort as you can. Then rate your discomfort between one and 10.
- 2 Now tap yourself five times between the eyebrows with two fingers.
- 3 Next tap yourself under your eyes five times.
- 4 Then tap yourself just below the collarbone five times.
- 5 Rate your level of discomfort. If you are not at least two levels down from where you started on the scale of one to 10, gently karate chop one hand with the other while reciting the following mantra, 'I accept myself even though I still have this kind of anxiety'.

I'm sure that the peoples of the war-torn, disaster-stricken areas of the world will be much relieved to know that all it will take to help them through their current traumas and long-term recovery is a few finger-tapping exercises.

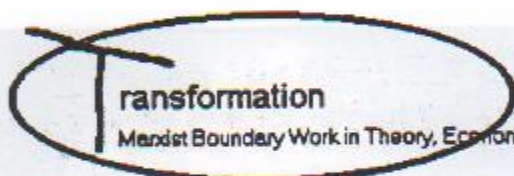
I for one have this overwhelming desire to take my two fingers: but not tap with them.

I wish you all a happy, healthy and therapy-free Christmas.

*See *Manufacturing Victims* by Dr Tana Dineen, Robert Davies Multimedia Publishing, 1996.

Yvonne McEwen has spent the past 25 years working with victims of trauma, including victims of road traffic accidents, civil conflict and terrorism. She is now sleeping with the enemy as she has undertaken a master's degree in critical psychology

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Angela Patmore on the dangerous myths of 'stress management'

Stress is no illness

'Stress management'—the theory that stress is a disease that should be 'managed'—is based on an often wilful misinterpretation of the clinical literature, which shows that the stress response is actually a survival mechanism of some importance. Triggered when we face challenges to our wellbeing, this 'fight or flight' response is designed to galvanise us into action. For a short time it enhances our mental and physical skills, and it is associated with brainwaves, focused attention and creativity. Ignoring this helpful mechanism and doing nothing about a serious threat, as, for example, when one stands upon the burning deck eating a banana, is maladaptive.

It is precisely because the stress response aids adaptation and survival by upgrading mental and physical resources that it is celebrated and rehearsed in leisure activities from sport and adventure challenges to classical music, fiction and horror movies: emotionally educating hobbies designed to make us aroused, tense or frightened. Common sense suggests that emotional competence is best achieved not by learning how to relax, but by learning how to function under pressure or when faced with upsetting circumstances.

The 'fight or flight' mechanism may be physically unpleasant, but it is not an illness, simply a response to a perceived threat at home, at work or elsewhere. The research shows that in all cases the threat should be addressed, rather than the response manipulated. Failure to exploit the stress response and deal with threats is a kind of death wish, the scientific term for which is 'learned helplessness'. It is this resignation which is responsible for morbid physiological changes that place the individual at increased risk of disease and death.

As a research fellow I worked with scientists at the centre for environmental and risk management at the University of East Anglia, a World Health Organisation collaborating centre. We reviewed hundreds of studies on 'stress', and we were shocked to find that a term originally used to describe a survival mechanism has been turned into a 'lurgie'. The generalised term 'stress', so popular in women's magazines and on prescription pads, is not actually a scientific or medical word at all, any more than 'nerves' or 'chill'. It can be used to mean cause, effect, stimulus, response, interaction, transaction, nasty feelings (as, for example, when your lawnmower is stolen), and the 'eebie-jeebies'. Stress management research strives to prove that this 'stress' is bad, and a killer, chiefly by examining rat hormones.

The effect of all this non-science nonsense has been to promote an industry seeking to

convince us that we have a dangerous psychological disease not suffered by our predecessors (despite their world wars, soup kitchens and workhouses, and the fact that at 14 they were mostly up chimneys or down mines). Worse, this pseudoscientific research has had the effect of villainising the physiological response to threat that is normal to human and animal 'survivors'.

During the summer I organised a conference to debunk the stress management industry. Speakers included very eminent people from the worlds of medicine, psychology, the social sciences and the emergency services, as well as actors and writers. The conference was a huge success, and the worried stress management industry is now seeking to calm itself down by means of benzodiazepines and relaxation exercises.

During our seminar we were trying to think how the stress management industry got started. I came up with an explanation which I think is as good as anybody's.

Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde revisited—the birth of a monster

Dr Jekyll is down on his luck. His latest experiments have been a bit controversial and his funding is up for review. 'Really, Hyde', he says. 'I feel I'm wasting my time in that laboratory. I want something big.'

'You want some big scare about people's 'elf. Convince 'em they're about to drop dead or they're ready for the Rubber Ramada. Then you can cure it, make your pot and retire to B...ton.'

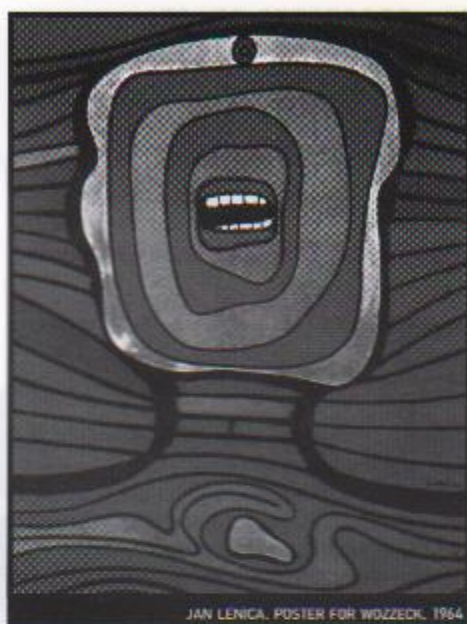
'You mean something psychological? Voodoo perhaps?'

'Voodoo could come into it, yerst. What you really want is a lurgie. You want people to have this lurgie, and then you turn round and cure it.'

'But my good man, I can't invent a disease. You can't convince people they've got a disease if they haven't. They're going to want to see some symptoms.'

At this point Mr Hyde becomes quite subdued; he scratches his low forehead. And then his ratty eyes brighten. 'What you do is you pick something that the body does already, and you turn it into a disease. You say them's yer symptoms!'

'You mean like temperature? Every time somebody's temperature goes up, they have this condition?'



JAN LENICA, POSTER FOR WOLZECK, 1964

'Yerst. But you can do better than that.'

'Hmmm. There is actually a mechanism, Hyde, that people experience every day. A survival mechanism, the response to threat. It's not very pleasant either, so that would add to its charm, hwa hwa.'

'Assit, guvnor! You tell 'em every time they get that mechanism they've got our disease. Then you just come cross with the cure.'

'But how would I cure a natural mechanism that's designed to galvanise them into action? I suppose I could tell them to calm down. That would dampen it down a bit. But I'd need some kind of scientific backing—the medical community would never buy this.'

Hyde, deep in thought, runs his fingers through his face. 'I got it. I know how you get the scientific backing. You pay 'em. You pay some researchers. They'll prove whatever you tell them to prove.'

'Good lord, Hyde: you might be right. We could set up experiments using animals. They can't talk—you can prove whatever you like with them, and we could expose them to various tortures, which would inevitably have a bad effect on the little wretches. And then we could say this research proves that our lurgie is very dangerous, and every time people feel the signs they had better look sharp and call us for help!'

'Well what's the name of this there mechanism?'

'Actually it's called stress, the stress mechanism.'

'Right—you can say you're "stress-doctoring" or "stress-boshing", somefing like that, couldn't yer?'

'I like that. I do. Mr Hyde, I believe I'm going to mix you a drink.'

Monstrous, isn't it?

Angela Patmore is a consultant in 'stress competence' and author of the University of East Anglia's 'Stress report'

Nick Frayn reports from the West Bank, where freedom for Palestinians is still not part of the deal

Access no areas



PHOTO: BOB GANNON

The latest deal in the Middle East peace process was greeted with a sigh of relief, if not the jubilation provoked by the original Oslo Accords of 1993. Under the Wye Memorandum Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority gains full or partial control over a further 27 per cent of the West Bank, in return for promises to crack down on radical Islamic activists.

But what difference will this deal make to those Palestinians who have to put up with the day-to-day frustrations and humiliations of life in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip?

I spent the summer studying at Birzeit University in the West Bank and witnessed Palestinians still struggling for such basic goals as the right to study or work where they choose. During the five years since the Oslo Accords they have seen their situation deteriorate rather than improve. More than once I heard the astonishing claim that 'life was better during the Intifada'—the state of open warfare between the Palestinians and the Israeli authorities that was ended by Oslo.

The Oslo Accords were supposed to result in the treatment of the West Bank and

the Gaza Strip as a 'single territorial unit'. In fact, since 1993 freedom of movement has been increasingly restricted. The Wye deal guarantees safe passage between the two, but these promises have been made many times before, only to turn up again as bargaining chips in the next round of negotiations.

The Gaza Strip has, to all intents and purposes, been sealed off. This has devastated the social and economic life of Gaza, where unemployment now tops 50 per cent. It has also made the situation increasingly difficult for young Gazans who want to study at West Bank universities.

Many Gazans apply to West Bank universities, both because higher education provision in Gaza is poor and because, like many teenagers elsewhere, they want to leave home and gain some independence. Na'il, a student on my social sciences course, applied to Birzeit as the most prestigious university in Palestine. He was the first to get a place in higher education from his family of 14 who live in Jabaliya refugee camp. But once accepted at Birzeit he found his troubles were only just beginning.

Since 1989 Gazans have needed an Israeli-issued magnetic strip card (which stores

information about 'security' and movements) in order to leave Gaza. To travel to the West Bank (a distance of about 100 kilometres) they need a permit that allows them to move across Israel. On top of this, Gazans need a residency permit to stay for an extended period in the West Bank (and vice versa): three separate permits to go to university.

Problems exist at all stages of this process. Magnetic strip cards are arbitrarily confiscated at the checkpoints out of Gaza, and permits for travel across Israel are often valid for a very short time. But the residency permits cause the most trouble. They are granted by the Civil Administration, which oversees Israel's occupation of the territories. Applicants are subjected to lengthy 'security checks' with apparently random outcomes. Some students refused permits on 'security' grounds are later cleared, but there is no right to appeal; 'security' information cannot be contested for 'security' reasons. Even at the end of this process permits may take months or even a year to materialise.

Na'il lost his first semester while waiting for his permit to arrive. Eventually he, like many others, decided it was better to travel illegally. He used a friend's

ID card to enter Jerusalem, thinking it was better to wait for the elusive permit somewhere he could at least begin his studies. However, after returning to Gaza for the summer and reapplying for permission he lost the first semester of the next year waiting. When the Gaza Strip was closed following bomb attacks in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem all permits were cancelled and Na'il lost yet another semester.

By this point, having completed only one semester in two years, Na'il gave up on the system. He was fortunate and managed to get smuggled out of Gaza by Palestinian police sympathetic to his situation. Other students travel first to Egypt, then to Jordan in order to enter the West Bank. Some hide under trucks. While I was at university there, a group of new students arrived who had managed to cut through the electric fences at Erez checkpoint on the border between Gaza and Israel.

But once in the West Bank students are daily at risk from arrest and 'deportation' back to Gaza. After explosions in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem in 1996 the Israeli army launched night raids on the villages where Birzeit students live. They arrested 280 students, 40 of whom were Gazan. One of the students was imprisoned for 18 months for being in the West Bank illegally, and the others found themselves back in Gaza the next day. When the Israeli authorities crack down like this many students literally take to the hills, living rough in the olive groves and terraces.

The Gazan students' situation seems unlikely to improve under the new deal. Just a week after the signing of the new agreement Arafat's Palestinian Authority police were making good their commitments to Israel, not only clamping down on supporters of Hamas (and placing their wheelchair-bound spiritual leader Sheikh Yassin under house arrest), but even raiding Arafat's own Fatah faction headquarters in Ramallah in an attempt to confiscate weapons. Meanwhile, Israel is to build 20 new military bases in those areas of the West Bank where it maintains full control.

Against the odds life goes on in the West Bank; but occupation is occupation, no matter who administers it.

DR MICHAEL FITZPATRICK

Awareness

makes you sick



It may be a symbol of wider political trends that 1998 was the year in which the pink ribbon of breast cancer awareness finally eclipsed the red ribbon of the AIDS campaigners. But now that every week of the year is devoted to raising public awareness of some condition or other—a trend universally regarded in a positive light—it is worth looking at the negative consequences of the heightened public consciousness of disease.

Though the benefits of awareness are contentious, its dangers are ignored. While everybody assumes that greater awareness leads to earlier diagnosis and more effective treatment, mortality from breast cancer has remained constant in the USA for the past 50 years—and in cancer survival rates Britain lags behind America. Meanwhile, in my surgery I see many women who do not have breast cancer but are terrified that they have, and a few women who have the disease, for whom the high public-profile of their condition is distressing.

One of the main effects of the promotion of breast cancer awareness is that it generates an exaggerated sense of risk. The Cancer Research Campaign has promoted the estimate that 'one in 12' women will develop breast cancer, which featured in a recent poster campaign. According to an authoritative review in the *British Medical Journal*, this is 'correct only for women who have escaped a number of equally serious but more likely threats to life at an earlier age' ('Putting the risk of breast cancer in perspective', 7 November 1998). The authors conclude that 'for most women, the lifetime risk of dying of breast cancer is only one in 26; the other 25 will die of something else'.

Most of the women who come into the surgery worried about breast lumps are under 50—though the vast majority of deaths from breast cancer are in women

over 65. Only one woman in 136 in Britain dies of breast cancer before the age of 50. Though the risk of dying from breast cancer increases with age, it appears to progress more slowly in older women, so that they often live long enough to die from some other cause. One of the ironies of discussing the risks of breast cancer is that, if the woman smokes, she has a greater risk of dying from lung cancer: even if she is a non-smoker, she is far more likely to die of heart disease.

Public awareness of breast cancer has intensified the demand for screening tests which promise early diagnosis. The most basic is the technique of breast self-examination, generally recognised to be much more effective in generating anxiety than it is at detecting tumours. Yet when this was publicly acknowledged by the government's chief medical officer a couple of years ago he was forced to back down by the disease awareness lobby. Women's magazines and health promotion leaflets are still offering detailed diagrams and earnest advice about how to detect lumps—resulting in a steady flow into the surgery of frightened women, some scarcely out of their teens, who are more likely to win the national lottery than to have breast cancer.

For women over 50 the key screening test is the mammogram. Though this has been shown to be effective in detecting tumours, it does so at the cost of finding many lumps which subsequently turn out to be benign. The technique of aspirating cells from a suspicious lump with a fine needle and examining them under a microscope has greatly enhanced the process of diagnosis. However, whereas the mammogram is uncomfortable, fine needle aspiration is quite painful—and the vast majority turn out to be negative.

An inevitable consequence of greater breast cancer awareness is the demand to

extend mammography to women in their 40s. According to one commentator this has provoked a debate in the USA 'out of proportion to its potential impact on public health' ('Mammography and the politics of randomised controlled trials', *BMJ*, 31 October 1998). Although numerous trials have failed to confirm the efficacy of this technique in younger women—and despite concerns that it might do greater harm—political pressures from disease awareness campaigns have resulted in younger women having mammograms.

Women who have had breast cancer are perhaps the greatest casualties of breast awareness. It is not only that they are reminded of their disease every time they turn on the television or open a newspaper or magazine—and every time they see a pink ribbon on the bus or train.

The popular discussion of the role of lifestyle factors in predisposing women to breast cancer compounds women's worries about their future with guilty reflections on their past behaviour. This is encouraged by epidemiological surveys which report the loosest of associations as causal influences. The risk of breast cancer appears to be increased in women who have no children or who have them after the age of 30; in women who have taken the oral contraceptive pill or hormone replacement therapy; in women who drink alcohol and have a high-fat diet. The relatively strong influence of family history on chances of getting breast cancer provides further scope for recriminations and fatalistic preoccupations—it's my genetic destiny to die a premature and disfiguring death.

During last year's breast awareness week a patient who has survived mastectomy, radiotherapy and chemotherapy and now has a good prognosis, came in to ask me what she had done to deserve breast cancer. I don't know who benefits from breast awareness, but I know many of its victims. ●

FUTURES

Tony Gilland wants a more balanced diet in the discussion of genetically modified food

Who's afraid of Frankenfood?

Forget Frankenstein: today's fears about the future relationship of humanity and science focus on something far closer to our stomachs. If 1996-97 was the era of the BSE panic about beef, 1998 has been the year of the genetically modified (GM) food scares, promoted by an unusual alliance of supermarkets, environmentalists, consumer groups and the future monarch.

Malcolm Walker, chief executive of the food chain Iceland, has declared that 'the introduction of genetically modified ingredients is probably the most significant and potentially dangerous development in food production this century'. Prince Charles thinks that 'this kind of genetic modification of crops is taking mankind into realms that belong to God, and to God alone'. He (Charles that is, not God) is worried about the 'unforeseen consequences' of such meddling in nature; that it might cause 'a kind of pollution which is self-perpetuating'.

The negative attitude to genetic modification has been building up among consumer and environmental groups since 1996, when the first GM soya beans, imported from the USA, found their way into a variety of processed foods. By late 1998 food chains have barred GM foods from their shelves, activists have wrecked test sites, and the government has wobbled by giving serious consideration to a moratorium on the planting of GM crops. A widespread view is that GM foods are unnecessary, dangerous and an offence against nature.

Yet none of the fears raised stands up to a rational assessment of the facts. As so often today there seems to be a widening gap between the hard evidence about an exciting area of science and technology, and a public discussion shaped by speculative fears about the impact of this technology on future generations. So great is this fear of the future that it could thwart the potential of GM food.

GM crops may be able to increase yields, while reducing chemical use and costs. Modifying crops to be herbicide-resistant, or to have their own 'in-built' resistance to insects, pests, disease or adverse weather conditions, means that herbicides, pesticides and insecticides can be used more efficiently, and that fewer crops will be lost to disease or bad weather. Commercially viable crops whose

taste and nutritional content are improved—a strawberry modified to taste sweeter or a banana modified to contain more vitamins—are expected soon.

Where GM crops are already being grown farmers are talking up the benefits. In the USA the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications estimates that 70 per cent of insect-resistant cotton planted in 1996 required no insecticide to deal with target insects. An estimated \$60 million was saved on 1.8 million acres of produce. Similarly borer-resistant corn resulted in a nine per cent increase in yield, saving an estimated \$190 million on seven million acres of corn in 1997.

But what about the risks? Professor Jonathan Jones, based at the John Innes Institute in Norwich, has been working with transgenic plants for the past 15 years. The day after Prince Charles issued his statement in June, Jones took up the challenge and attacked the idea that the technology was unpredictable. 'Genetic engineering of plants involves adding two or three genes to this complement of 20 000, and the genes that are added are extremely well understood...When we eat tomatoes we are eating material that carries disease-resistance genes that have been bred in from wild relatives of tomato [by selective breeding, not genetic modification], and perhaps 2000 other genes unavoidably brought in at the same time...This is a much less well-controlled exercise.' (*Independent*, 9 June 1998)

As for the unknown impact of GM crops on wild plants, seeds, insects and birds, nobody has a blueprint mapping out precisely what will happen. But why would such a blueprint be necessary? Potatoes, tomatoes and sunflowers were brought to Europe from America and, as Jonathan Jones points out, 'doubtless they displaced many local varieties; so what?'. The argument that any mistakes made with GM crops will be irreversible is equally flawed. As the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes pointed out at the end of 1997, crops, GM or otherwise, do not survive very well in the wild. They have, after all, been bred to flourish in very particular conditions.

Many of the arguments against genetically modified crops and food are wrong. Unfortunately, scientists who have dared to make this point are in a minority. Those who have a

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GM food company Monsanto advertises its opponents' views



direct interest in the development of GM food are often coy about taking a stand, including much of the biotech industry. Even when Monsanto ran a series of high-profile adverts about the benefits of GM food, it held back from attacking its critics, choosing instead to present the debate as 'matters of opinion' and advertising its opponents' views. This is not because Monsanto lacks a sense of the importance of the discussion; a senior representative went so far as to say, at a recent conference in Brussels, 'the debate over biotechnology has become the crucible upon which the value of progress itself is debated'.

Meanwhile, when it comes to genetic engineering, the government can only urge caution. Towards the end of October, in response to the call for a moratorium on the commercial release of GM crops, Michael Meacher announced the next best thing: 'a programme of managed development of GM crops whereby the first commercial plantings are strictly limited and monitored for ecological effects along with comparable plantings of conventional crops.' In the midst of the media mania about GM last summer, agriculture minister Nick Brown was busy winning favour with the critics of GM technology by announcing increases in the payments to be made to those English farmers who wished to convert from modern to organic farming.

For those scientists who would like to intervene robustly in the debate, working out where to begin is often as much of an obstacle as the prevailing sentiment of caution. As Professor Michael Wilson at the Scottish Crop Research Institute put it to me, 'the sort of propaganda nonsense which is being spouted usually has no scientific substance or veracity. It is very difficult to stand in front of a camera with a microphone in your face and make a plausible, intelligent and professional answer to complete gobbledegook without simply saying: "this is gobbledegook." Which, of course, lowers one to the level of those using scare-mongering tactics against scientific research'.

Professor Wilson's frustration at having to argue against an unsubstantiated mantra about 'unforeseen and irreversible' consequences is understandable. Perhaps what is hardest for scientists who have put so many years' work into developing this new technology is the fact that the debate cannot be conducted merely at the level of scientific issues. The bigger issue in question is whether man, and his scientific endeavours, can be trusted to help improve our lives rather than unleash unknowable havoc on the future. The debate goes way beyond soya beans and tomato puree.

CROSSCURRENTS

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Signs of the times

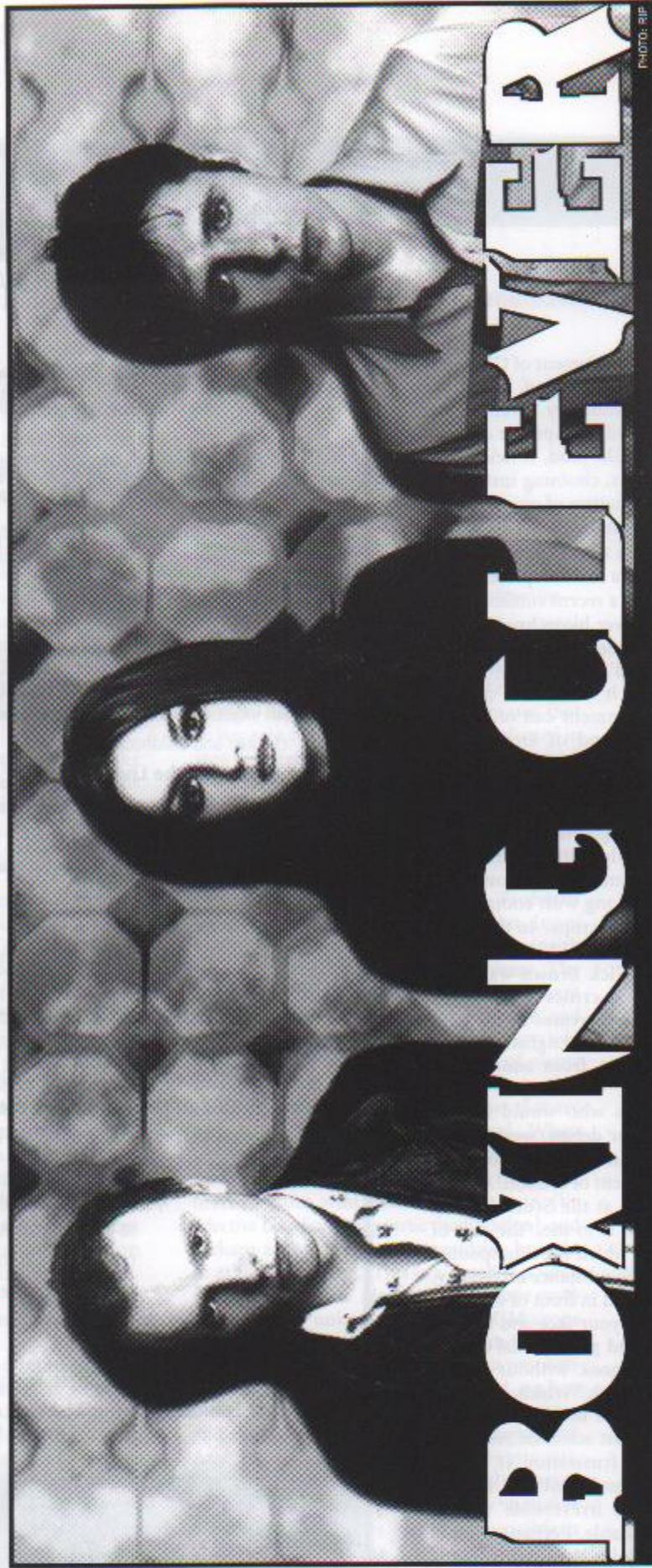
'I could have paid off my debts a lot quicker, but I only did the things I actually believed in myself, like Cranberry Juice Lite'
The Duchess of York on not selling out

'I made a decision: national service or not, I'm stopping this. I saw what lunacy it was and apologised to the frogs'

Sir Paul McCartney, of 'Frog chorus' fame, recalls how he killed frogs in preparation for doing his national service. ('If I couldn't kill a frog, how was I going to bayonet a man?')

'This is not a plant'
TV gardener Alan Titchmarsh, upon picking up a bra hurled at him by a female fan during a book reading

'There's no fucker here big enough to give me a red card'
Robert Davy, after being warned that he would be carded for his sexist remarks during a TV show about women footballers



Black Box Recorder are welcomed into the ring by Neil Davenport

We did not intend it', says John Moore, 'but some people have picked up on us as the antidote to New Labour. It was never conscious, but we did start our first album on the day Britain was rebranded'. Moore (ex-Jesus and Mary Chain), Luke Haines (singer with The Auteurs) and Sarah Nixey (china doll vocals) are Black Box Recorder, a sharp trio who draw blood from the sensitive skin of New Britain.

Their debut, *England Made Me*, is 37 minutes of stripped-down guitar pop: sparse but glowing with tenderness and biting wit: totally out of kilter with the excessive emotionalism

displayed elsewhere. 'Maybe it's because we are older', says Moore. 'But we got that out of our system a long time ago. You are supposed to make a deep, dark record about your tortured soul. The problem with bands like Radiohead and The Verve is that they are supposed to be saying a lot, but they have very little to say.'

With its title taken from a Graham Greene novel, the Black Box Recorder album is intended as 'a detached look at the good and bad things which have shaped us'. That includes an examination of self-pity, which Luke Haines sees as a 'pathetic' English disease: 'What do we have now? Self-pitying footballers

and self-pitying football fans. It's getting worse.' Haines is unimpressed by Blur's Damon Albarn and his pronouncements in favour of Britain's post-Diana emotionalism. 'He always gets it wrong, doesn't he? Lovely lad, I'm sure.'

Moore and Haines may not see their work as a premeditated response to New Labour's instinct for interfering; and *England Made Me* is autobiographical rather than polemical. But one track, 'Ideal Home', captures the tension between family life and officially sponsored suspicion. 'It is also about how frail English life has become', says Moore, 'overshadowed by the fear that we are living on the brink of

disaster. I'm not saying child abuse should not be addressed, but there is too much welfare intrusion. It has created a whole new layer of mistrust between people.'

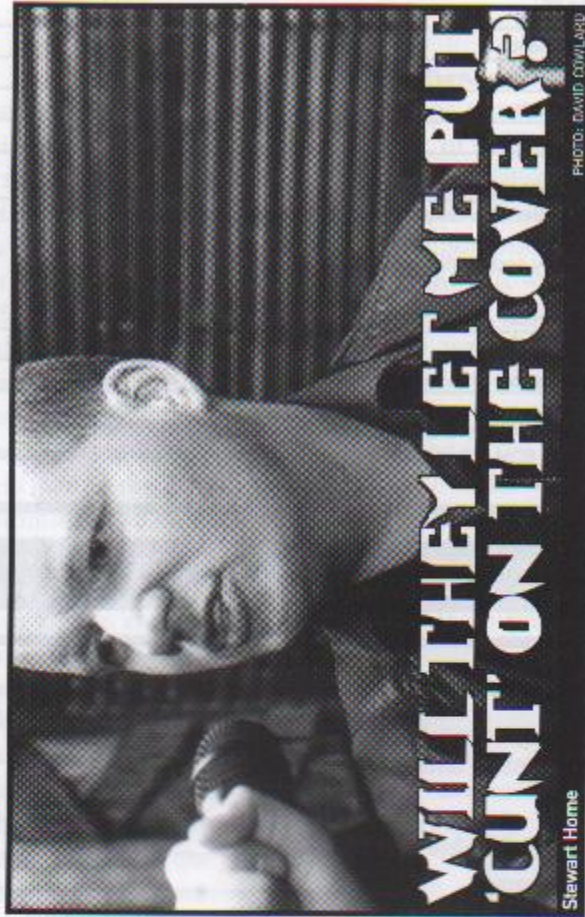
As a sometime importer of the illicit drink absinthe, it is not surprising that Moore champions individual freedom. 'It is up to the individual to decide what's not good for them. If absinthe was legalised people might not like it. But at least they should have the chance to try it.' ●
Black Box Recorder, not to be confused with Black Box, but definitely right on time. Neil Davenport is a Manchester-based music journalist

'If people see my book and I sober one person up, I've won' Tony Adams.

(But Tony, your face has been doing that for years)

'This is a sleepy spot and is on the pilgrim trail in west Wales. It's not the sort of place where you would expect to find orgies'

Resident of Nevern, commenting on the Garden of Eden naturalist club run by retired major Roger Brett. An advertisement advised female clients: 'Ladies should not wear knickers unless they are prepared to leave them in the trophy room on departure'



WILL THEY LET ME PUT 'CUNT' ON THE COVER?

Stewart Home

PHOTO: DAVID COY/LASO

The success of people like Irvine Welsh has changed the publishing industry. He has made a certain kind of content acceptable which was not acceptable before. We can all thank him for that. But tied in with it there is an increasing conservatism within the publishing industry.

What might be described as sex and violence is now widespread in books, not just art books; but there is a much greater resistance to fiction that is not linear, that wants to experiment with form. In this respect publishing is far more conservative now than it was 30 years ago. It does not seem to know where it is going, except towards narrowing its range.

There is an assumption that readers are basically stupid. There are still gatekeepers out there: lazy editors, intellectually, who assume that if they cannot deal with something, nobody else can. My next novel, to be published by Do Not Press in the spring, is called *Cunt* because it is narrated by a cunt in search of a cunt. But the word 'cunt' is very problematic for a lot of publishers and it was difficult for me to find one who would take it, although none of them would say it was because of the title. It remains to be seen whether I get it on the cover. There is no point pretending that you have absolute autonomy, because if you never encounter resistance

Technology is normally spoken of in the future tense, but all our exhibits are very real, even the ones at the prototype stage.

The future is now. Gary Stewart is the curator of *High Definition*, the shop window for British digital design which travels to Korea and Brazil in 1999 after its initial showing in Hong Kong. Stewart does not look like a techno-geek. Born in Birmingham of Jamaican parentage, he worked in the Munich recording studio used by Giorgio Moroder, before moving on to ARTEC (the Arts Technology Centre in Islington) and nIVA (the International Institute for Visual Arts) where he is currently head of multimedia projects.

He may not look like one, but Stewart is so enthusiastic about his innovative exhibits that he can begin to sound a little techie:

There are 82 elements, that's hardware and software, broken down into four areas: living, leisure, learning and creativity. Among these I do have favourites. I like the μ -FI because it's beginning to cause panic in the music industry.

It's a small personal music system which stores music from the internet or CD on to a tiny card, hardly thicker than a credit card. You surf the net, find a piece of music and download it on to your μ -FI and you get perfect hi-fi quality. In the past when people have spoken about breaking the stranglehold of the mega-music corporations, it has usually meant downloading some dodgy, screechy-sounding internet music. But because of the special compression involved the quality is not compromised in any way. It could mean a radical shift in the personal consumption of music, since it will allow independent record labels to bypass large music companies.

Will we get extra loyalty points for wearing one of these round Tesco's? Is this where cyber-utopia flips over into a dystopia of super-surveillance? Who knows? But at least the development of digital technologies extends the range of possibilities. And in these days of technophobia it is refreshing to hear from somebody like Gary Stewart who wants the future to be here now.

www.high-definition.org

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READING

BETWEEN THE LINES

Unbanning *Ulysses* led to a more subtle censorship of Joyce's classic, discovers Louis Ryan

OBSCENE AND NOT HEARD

JAMES JOYCE AND CENSORSHIP: THE TRIALS OF *ULYSSES*

Paul Vanderham
Macmillan Press, £45 hbk

ULYSSES WAS RECENTLY JUDGED BY A PANEL OF EMINENT American writers to be the greatest work of English prose fiction this century. But when it was first serialised in the *Little Review* between 1918 and 1920 it was met with a universal moralistic outcry, banned upon publication in 1922 in every English-speaking country. It was the USA that led the way in banning the book, but it was also the USA that first lifted the ban in 1934. Paul Vanderham's book tells this story in compelling detail. He also shows how the struggle with the censor shaped not just the reception of *Ulysses*, but its writing.

Anticipating the censor, and unwilling to make the compromise of an expurgated version, Joyce began to elaborate an intricate armature for his creation. He worked up the 'schema' of correspondences between his own *Ulysses* and Homer's *Odyssey*, and the further correspondences between each section of *Ulysses* and its representative organ, colour, symbol and art. This intricate formalism served to emphasise the artistic nature of his creation, and, as such, its autonomy from the normal standards and strictures of society. At the same time he pursued his own vision undeterred; indeed, it is the later sections of the book, particularly 'Circe' and 'Penelope' (Molly Bloom's famous soliloquy), that were to contain the greatest number of 'offensive' passages.

Literary modernists like Ezra Pound and TS Eliot used the formal elaboration in *Ulysses* as the basis of its defence. This consummately intricate work of art could not be subject to the judgement of a bunch of vulgar moralisers, they argued. But this elitist defence of *Ulysses* carried its own subtle judgements that



Vanderham rightly calls 'critical censorship', expressing these critics' own unease with Joyce's earthy and anarchic sensuality. The moralisers reduced *Ulysses* to their own grubby concerns, while the aesthetes set it apart in a rarefied limbo that only the initiated could approach. Drawing on the notion of 'art for art's sake' they held to the view that true literature was so detached from and superior to everyday life that it could not possibly 'deprave or corrupt'.

Provocatively, Vanderham insists that *Ulysses* is obscene, and cites as evidence a letter from Joyce that describes the 'Penelope' section as 'probably more obscene than any preceding episode'. 'Is it really so monstrous', writes Vanderham, 'to believe that Joyce could produce a work that undermined the moral or political or religious order of his day? If so it is presumably monstrous to believe that an artist could influence the culture of his or her day in any way whatsoever'.

THE 1934 WOOLSEY RULING LIFTING THE BAN ON *ULYSSES* sums up the aesthetic defence of Joyce. The judgement sets aside the traditional standard of what would influence *l'homme moyen sensuel*—the average sensual man—in matters of literary obscenity, substituting an altogether more sophisticated and formalistic standard. This is richly ironic, for surely the greatest literary embodiment of *l'homme moyen sensuel* is none other than Leopold Bloom, hero of *Ulysses*, whose concerns encompass some pretty dubious preoccupations. Vanderham's book is a useful warning not to exchange explicit censorship for license in a gilded cage. ●

FOOTBALL HAS BECOME SOMETHING MORE THAN A BUSINESS. IT IS COMING CLOSE TO DISPLACING PARTY POLITICS AS THE SUBJECT OF NATIONAL DEBATE

FOOTBALL BETWEEN GOD AND MAMMON

THE FOOTBALL BUSINESS

David Conn, Mainstream Publishing, £7.99 pbk

DAVID CONN'S BOOK ATTACKING THE COMMERCIALISATION of 'the People's game' comes just in time to ride the furore over Rupert Murdoch's takeover of Manchester United. Conn argues that football has sold its soul to the City and is now being destroyed by corporate greed. He paints a Dickensian picture of fat-cat chairmen lining their pockets from stock market flotations; overpaid superstar players commanding astronomical salaries; and corporate hospitality clients displacing traditional fans. Conn is particularly concerned that football's new wealth has not trickled down to its grassroots, which have been left to decay.

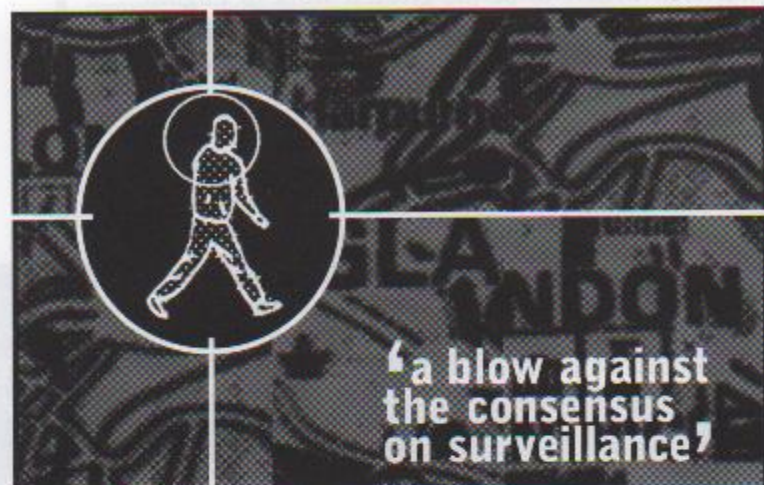
Football, it is true, has been transformed in the 1990s, but not just because of the money. Football had been declining as a working class leisure pursuit since the 1950s, long before the advent of the Premier League and Sky TV. Aggregate attendance, which peaked at 70 million a year in the decade after the war, had slumped to 20 million by the late 1980s. Greater affluence led to a diversification of working class leisure pursuits. Football's traditional constituency had not been priced out; they had found better things to do with their Saturdays.

By the same token, money, far from killing football, has been instrumental in its revitalisation in the 1990s. Government subsidies, Sky TV revenues and City cash have paid for comfortable modern stands, better pitches and top foreign stars. Attendance throughout the domestic game has increased (reaching 24 million last year), TV coverage of football has been revolutionised, and the technical quality of the football on offer is vastly improved. Football, moreover, has acquired a social significance it never previously enjoyed. Football is discussed by the chattering classes; universities run degree courses in football studies; bookshop shelves overflow with new football writing; the government has even set up a Football Task Force. When the prime minister feels compelled to address the nation after England's exit from the World Cup, it is clear that football has become something more than a business. It is coming close to displacing party politics as the subject of national debate.

David Conn also wants football to be more than just a game. This is evident in his condemnation of the greedy Premiership clubs for refusing to share their new

wealth with the impoverished grassroots of non-league and school football. His fear is not for the lack of a means to nurture future footballing talent. Indeed, Conn dismisses as elitist the 'football academies' which are being established for precisely this purpose. Conn's fear for the grassroots is motivated by a deeper concern which has little to do with football. As he sees it: 'Football's decline at the grassroots is only a small vein in the general decay of the body of civic life in this country.' Football, it seems, is an integral mechanism for maintaining social cohesion. This is also how New Labour sees it. Tony Blair has said that 'sport is not just about gold medals, glory, fame, wealth and winning European Cups...It is about learning through mind and body the values that help make a complete and rounded individual working within a strong community'. Football, as a result, has become an arena for government social policy. The consequences of civic renewal policies are already evident in the PC codes of conduct that fans are expected to observe, and the demand that players behave as model citizens. It is not money but this kind of moral engineering that poses the real threat to football.

Duleep Allirajah



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RACIAL THINKING IS NOT MERELY AN EXPRESSION OF THE IMPULSE TO DOMINATE AND OPPRESS; AT TIMES IT EXPRESSES A DEFENSIVE FEAR OF LOSING POWER

Suke Wolton uncovers the insecure origins of white supremacy

A CHIP ON WHOSE SHOULDER?

THE SILENT WAR: IMPERIALISM AND THE CHANGING PERCEPTION OF RACE

Frank Furedi, Pluto Press, £14.99 pbk, £45.00 hbk

THE SILENT WAR TAKES THE READER THROUGH THE TRANSFORMATION in racial thinking that occurred in the first half of this century. Frank Furedi investigates the relationship between the shift in racial rhetoric and the broader geopolitical changes that were taking place at the time. The development of racial consciousness—thinking of one's social group as a 'race apart'—emerged in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Although it appeared to sum up the arrogance and dominance of British imperial power, it also provided an outlet for fears of weakness. As Furedi points out, racial thinking is not merely an expression of the impulse to dominate and oppress. At times it expresses a defensive response, a manifestation of the fear of losing power.

'Whenever Western powers were challenged', Furedi notes, there was the 'beginning of a new era in international affairs'. In the anxious comments of Americans and the British, 'the underlying premise was the assumption that a setback to any section of the white race inflicted by people of colour would weaken the existing balance of racial power' (p30). 'Race', the supposed measure of superiority, had become the source of weakness; the very thing that was thought to stimulate rebellion and a rejection of Western authority.

During the 1920s some authors were particularly alarmist, preoccupied with the 'loss of white prestige'. Race riots in Britain and America following the First World War fuelled discussions in which social conflict was presumed to result from 'race difference'. In 1919 Japan's proposal to include a racial equality clause in the League of Nations' charter was vetoed by US president Woodrow Wilson. This move further highlighted the potential for conflict internationally between the Western powers and the 'non-white peoples'.

The fear of equality among the elites of the 1930s led to them 'reversing the problem of racism'. Furedi highlights how race prejudice was criticised on the basis that the reaction to white racism could produce a worldwide conflict. In this way, even when race was problematised, it was the non-whites that were the problem. Furedi

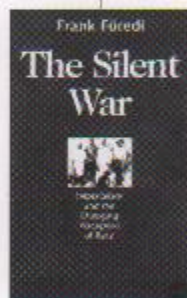
writes: 'If one relied entirely on official correspondence, it would be easy to draw the conclusion that whereas Europeans tend to be colour-blind, everyone else was motivated by a feeling of colour.' (p131)

Furedi's distinctive contribution is to focus on the way in which the reformulation of the issue of race served the Western elites. He calls the outlook of the Anglo-American elite 'white solidarity'—solidarity in the face of an exaggerated fear of native revolt. Analysing race in terms of international relations pays dividends in this study. For me it raised the question, which Furedi does not fully address, of just how it was that the 'white solidarity' was forged, or how national differences affected the working of the Anglo-American elite.

Undoubtedly, as has been shown in Christopher Thorne's excellent study, *Allies of a Kind*, much of Anglo-American cooperation during the war was influenced by the shared common language and outlook of white Anglo-Saxon Protestantism. But, even during the Second World War, there were significant arenas of disagreement. By looking at the way in which these arguments were resolved we can see how race, as a political issue, was transformed and reused.

During the Second World War the issue of race was essential in establishing a consensus across the Atlantic. At the start of the war America was critical of Britain's empire, particularly as the USA saw colonial unpopularity as a source for future 'colour conflict'. By the end of the war the US government agreed to let Britain, and even France, rebuild their empires in the Far East. During the debate between British and US officials the issue of race came up time and time again. Given it was now a political problem, said the British, and one on which our record is no worse than the USA's, moral authority needs to be established in a language unassociated with the 'colour bar'. In contrast with the 'colonial problem', segregation was part of the USA itself. Reinventing imperial prestige in the postwar world, suggested the British to the Americans, meant getting around this embarrassment.

The widening of the 'race relations' term, as Furedi shows, had the effect of minimising the significance of the white-black relationship which was so clearly underpinned by the imperial relationship. By discussing Malays and Chinese, Kenyans and Asians, and so on, friction between 'races' was seen as something inevitable, psychological and outside the realm of power relations in the world. Today this attitude is still with us. Endless 'racisms' are uncovered and used to explain civil wars, international conflicts and a myriad of tensions. Political ideology, economic changes and international interference have been forgotten in the new world order. Understanding the language of this new form of moral authority shows us that the elites have ⇨



CAPITALIST SOCIAL ARRANGEMENTS MEAN THAT THE SYSTEM IS SLOW TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF INNOVATION. THE UNIQUE PROBLEM TODAY IS THAT PEOPLE LIKE ELKINGTON WANT TO HOLD IT BACK EVEN MORE

↳ reconstructed themselves on the basis that they are 'holier than thou'. They may not say 'whiter than white' but the implication of difference is still there. 'Anti-racist' etiquette expresses the notion that the elites have better manners than the rest of us.

Friends of LM can buy Frank Furedi's *The Silent War* at the reduced price of £12 plus £1 p&p. Phone (0171) 269 9224 for details



SUSTAINING CAPITALISM

CANNIBALS WITH FORKS: THE TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE OF 21ST CENTURY BUSINESS

John Elkington. Capstone. £18.99 hbk

JOHN ELKINGTON IS A STRONG ADVOCATE OF SUSTAINABLE development for the business world, and has coined the phrase 'the triple bottom line' to argue that corporations should not be run solely along profit lines, but should also work to ensure environmental protection and social justice. The book is part of a wider trend to rethink the role of the corporation under the assumption that capitalism, as it presently exists, is unsustainable. The notion of sustainability goes beyond environmentalism. For Elkington, a consultant experienced in green economics, the need for environmental preservation is simply the best rationale for a much more wide-ranging implementation of 'sustainability' across industry.

Elkington is not alone. The dominant assumption that change is destructive today has led to a one-sided view of capitalist development. It has become fashionable to see the system as short-term, wasteful and exploitative. In this view corporations become cannibals—albeit with forks. People like Elkington, who sees his role as exhorting managers to change their behaviour, seem to have profited (a word he would not enjoy) from peddling this gloomy and one-sided vision.

Capitalist social arrangements mean that the system is slow to take advantage of innovation, with the result that the tempo of the economy often lags behind that of human ingenuity. The unique problem today, however, is that people like Elkington want to hold back the system even more. Elkington's agenda is littered with ideas to restrict and to limit. He calls for re-regulation of the market—even though the activities of NGOs, new legal and environmental constraints, and various other checks are already making corporate managers obsessed with risk-avoidance rather than growth potential.

Behind the call for sustainability in business lurks the hidden agenda of self-restraint. Elkington welcomes 'stakeholder capitalism'—the notion that those running

business are not as important as the groups business serves, whether they be investors or consumers—as a valuable addition to creating a sustainable business culture. Yet this ethos will encourage the very short-termism of which Elkington is so dismissive. Corporations, more cash-rich than ever before, are not investing because economic development has become stigmatised. In turn, this lack of investment—the result of a culture of constraint—has helped to fuel alternative investment in paper assets, boosting the short-termist practice of managing for shareholder value.

Ben Glover

BACK TO THE FUTURE

PARIS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Jules Verne. Random House. £14.99 hbk

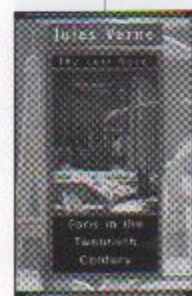
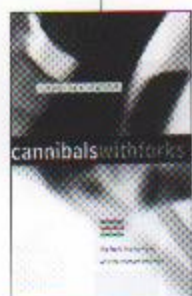
'O TERRIBLE INFLUENCE OF THIS RACE WHICH SERVES NEITHER god nor king, given over to the mundane sciences, to base mechanical professions! Pernicious breed! What will you not attempt, left to your own devices, abandoned without restraint to that fatal spirit of knowledge, of invention, of progress?' This quote from Paul-Louis Courier (1772-1825) opens Jules Verne's prophetic lost novel. So set aside your childhood memories of the Disney adaptations of Verne's later work, in which men and machines boldly go where nobody has gone before, to the moon and the bottom of the oceans.

A futuristic tale written in 1863 and set in the 1960s, *Paris in the Twentieth Century* traces the early adult life of Michel Dufrenoy, a classical scholar out of sync with a fast-moving utilitarian world. Dufrenoy's tale provides a vehicle for Verne himself to express his unhappiness with the development of Paris by Napoleon III.

In Verne's view the great emperor's nephew and his quest to modernise Paris was wrecking the city's artisan cafe culture. What he could not see was that the changes which served industrial vested interests also brought much-needed advances for the rest of the inhabitants.

Despite its theme it is hard not to read the novel as a homage to progress. The energy of the age, together with Verne's foresight, allowed him to predict many technological advances that would not become reality until the 1960s. In fact he was so ahead of his time that the book was rejected on the grounds that it painted an unrealistic view of the future. Lost for 130 years, it is worrying to think that today Verne's pessimism may find more resonance. If such ideas had not been given short shrift then, we may never have been treated to his later, thoroughly optimistic classics.

Simon Knight



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